Society And History

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point

This text authored by Martyr Ayatullah Murtadha Mutahhari serves to present the Islamic approach to society and history. The author combined these two areas of study as the discussion of the problems that deal with society and history are closely related and this analysis reveals Islam's profoundness in dealing with various issues.

Introduction

The outlook of a school of thought regarding society and history and its specific approach to them, plays a decisive role in its ideology. From this point of view, it is essential, in the context of Islamic world outlook, to throw light on the Islamic approach to society and history.

It is evident that Islam is neither a theory of society nor a philosophy of history. In the sacred Book of Islam, no social or historical problem is dealt with in the technical jargon of sociology and philosophy of history. In the same way no other problem, ethical, legal or philosophical, is discussed in the Qur'an, either in the current terms or according to the traditional classification of sciences. However, these and other problems related with various sciences can be deduced from the Book.

Islamic thinking on society and history, because of its special importance, is a topic that deserves to be studied and investigated properly, and, like its many other teachings, reveals Islam's profoundness in dealing with various issues. Since the problems that deal

with society and history are closely related, and since we wish to discuss them briefly, it was apt to discuss them together in a single book. However, we shall discuss the problem related to society and history only to the extent that would help in .understanding Islamic ideology

We shall begin with society and then proceed to discuss history. Following are some of :the questions that can be raised about society

١. ?What is society

٢. ?Is man by nature social and gregarious

٣. Is it true that the individual is primary and society is secondary, or is the truth contrary to it, that is, society is primary and individual is secondary in importance? Or ?is there any third possible approach

۴. .The relationship between society and tradition

۵. Whether the individual is free or if he is determined by society and the social ?structure

۶. In what institutions, poles, and groups is society classifiable according to its primary ?divisions

٧. Whether human societies are absolutely of the same nature and essence, their differences being similar to the differences among members of the same species? Or if they vary according to geographic variations, temporal and spatial conditions, and levels of development of their culture and civilization, assuming different forms and essences with each calling for a separate sociology based upon its particular

?ideology

In other words, is a single system of sociology, ethics, and ideology applicable to all humanity, in the same way as a single system of medicine and laws of physiology applies to all human beings

?regardless of their geographic, racial and historical variations

Does every society, according to its regional, cultural and historical background, ?require a special sociology and affirm a particular ideology

Are human societies, which from the dawn of history up to the present day have .۸ been diversified and grown independent of one another, with a kind of pluralism governing them (at least in an individual if not in a generic sense), moving from ?plurality and diversity towards attainment of unity and homogeneity

Does the future of humanity lie in attaining one society, one culture and one civilization, and whether at the end its plurality will be replaced by a stage of homogeneity in which all its contradictions and conflicts would be overcome and resolved? Or, contrarily, is humanity eternally condemned to multiplicity of culture and ?ideology, and to a pluralism that reinforces the social identity of its particular, units

In our view, these are the relevant problems which need to be discussed from the Islamic point of view, so that these issues are brought to light and put in a proper .perspective. We propose to deal briefly with these issues one by one

?What is Society

point

A society consists of groups of human beings who are linked together by means of specific systems and customs, rites and laws, and have a collective social existence. Collective life is that in which groups of people live together in a particular region, and .share the same climate and similar foodstuffs

Trees of a garden also `live' together and share

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the same climate and the same kind of nourishment. In the same manner, gazelles of a herd also graze together, and migrate together from place to place. But neither trees nor gazelles can be said to have a social life, as they do not form a society.

Human life is social in the sense that it is essentially gregarious. On the one hand human needs, benefits, satisfactions, work, and activity are social in essence, and the social system cannot be maintained but through division of labour, division of profits and a shared common satisfaction of needs within a particular set of traditions and systems.

On the other hand, specific ideas and ideals, temperaments, and habits govern human beings in general, giving them a sense of unity and integration. In other words, society represents a group of human beings, who, under the compulsion of a series of requirements and under the influence of a set of beliefs, ideals and goals, are amalgamated with one another and are immersed in a continuum of collective life.

The common social interests, and particular ties of human life unite human beings together, giving to every individual a sense of unity similar to that experienced by a group of people travelling together in an automobile or an Aeroplane or a Boat, heading towards the same destination, and sharing together the common hope of reaching the destination safely, the dangers of the way, and a common fate.

How beautifully the Prophet of Islam (saws) has described the philosophy of `enjoining

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right conduct and forbidding indecency' (al-'amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy `an al-munkar) by means of the following parable:

A group of people board a ship that sets sail on the sea tearing apart the waves. Every

one of them has a seat reserved for him. One of the travellers claiming that the seat occupied by him belonged to none other than him, starts making a hole under his seat with a sharp tool. Unless all the travellers immediately hold his hand and make him desist from doing so, they would risk drowning not only themselves but would also fail .to save the poor wretch from being drowned

?Is Man Social by Nature

The problem regarding the factors responsible for the emergence of social life in human beings has been raised from the ancient times. Is man born with the instinct of gregariousness, i.e. whether he was naturally created as a part of a whole, with an urge in his nature to be united with the whole or if he was not created as a gregarious ?being, but external compulsions and determinism imposed upon him a collective life

In other words, is he by nature inclined to live freely, and is disposed not to accept any kind of obligations and restrictions which have been imposed upon him, although they may be essential for social life? Has he in fact learnt from experience that no one is able to continue one's life in isolation, and so he has been forced to surrender to ?limitations imposed by social life

,Or

although he is not gregarious by nature, the factor that persuaded him to accept social existence was not compulsion, or at least compulsion had not been the sole factor? Or, was it by the ruling of his reason and through his faculty of calculation that he arrived at the conclusion that only through cooperation and social life could he better enjoy the gifts of nature, and, therefore, he chose to live in company with other .human beings? Accordingly, the problem can be posed in three ways

.Man is social by nature (۱)

.He is social by compulsion (۲)

.He is social by his own choice (٣)

According to the first theory, man's social life is similar to the partnership of a man and a woman in married life each of the partners was created as a part of a whole and by nature yearns to be united with the whole. According to the second theory, social life is like cooperation, such as a pact between two countries which are singly unable to defend themselves against a common enemy and are forced to work out an agreement of co…operation and collaboration. According to the third theory, social life is similar to the partnership of two capitalists, which gives rise to a commercial, .agricultural or industrial company aiming at attainment of greater profits

On the basis of the first theory, the main factor is inherent in man's own nature itself. On the basis of the second theory, it is something external to man's essence and independent of

it. And according to the third theory, the main factor responsible for social life is man's .intellectual and calculating faculty

According to the first view, sociability is a general and universal goal which man naturally aspires to attain. According to the second theory, sociability is a casual and accidental phenomenon, a secondary and not a primary objective. According to the .third theory, sociability is the result of man's faculty of reasoning and calculation

It may be said on the basis of the study of the Qur’anic verses that sociability is inherent in the very nature and creation of man. In the Surah al Hujurat the Qur’an :says

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ..

O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and“ tribes, that you may know one another [not that on account of this you may boast of being superior to others]. Certainly, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the most (God-fearing among you” (۴۹:۱۳

In this verse, besides an ethical precept, there is an implication which indicates the philosophy of social existence of man, according to which mankind is so created that it always lives in the form of groups, nations and tribes, and an individual is known through his relation to his respective nation and tribe an identity which is an integral part of social existence. If these relations which in one way, are the cause of commonness and association between

individual men, and, in the other way, are the cause of their separation and dissociation did not exist, it would have been impossible to distinguish one man from .another

As a consequence, social life, which is the basis of relationships of human beings with one another, would not have come into existence. These and similar other factors in social life, such as differences in features, colour, and physique, provide the ground .for specific marks of distinction of an individual and impart individuality to persons

Had all the individuals been of the same colour, features, and physique, and had they not been governed by different types of relationships and associations, they would have been like the standardized products of a factory, identical to one another, and .consequently could not be distinguished from one another

It would have ultimately resulted in the negation of social life, which is based upon relations and exchange of ideas, labour and commodities. Hence, association of individuals with tribes and groups has a natural purpose. The individual differences among human beings serve as an essential condition of social life. It must not, how... ever, be used as a pretext for prejudice and pride; for superiority is supposed to lie in .human nobility and an individual's piety

:In verse ۵۴ of Surah al...Furqan, the Qur'an states

وَهُوَ الَّذِی خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا

And He it is who hath created man from water, and hath appointed for him kindred"

".[by blood [relationships by birth] and kindred by marriage [acquired relationships

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(٢٥:٥۴)

This verse reveals the purpose of birth relationship and marriage relationship, which together bind individuals with each other, as underlying the design of creation. It is .through these relationships that individuals are distinguished from one another

:In Surat al_Zukhruf, verse ٣٢, it is stated

أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّکَ

نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِی الْحَيَاهِ الدُّنْيَا

وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا

وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّکَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

Is it they who apportion their Lord's mercy? We have appointed among them their" livelihood in the life of the world and raised some of them above others in rank, that some of them may tape labour from others, and the mercy of thy Lord is better than ([the wealth] that they amass. "(۴٣:٣٢

While discussing the conception of Tawhid (Divine Unity), in the part dealing with the world outlook of Tawhid, I have dealt with the meaning of this verse. Here I will give just the substance of the verse. Human beings have not been created alike in respect of their talents and dispositions. Had they been created so, everyone would have

possessed the same qualities and all would have lacked diversity of talents. Naturally, as a consequence, none would have required the services of others, thus making .mutual co‐operation and mutual obligations meaningless

God has created man in diversity with different spiritual, physical, and intellectual aptitudes, dispositions, and inclinations. He has given some people special abilities, and has imparted superiority to some over others in certain talents. By means of this, He has made all human

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beings intrinsically needful of others and inclined to associate with others. Thus He has laid down the foundation of collective and social life. The above mentioned verse also asserts that social existence is not merely a conventional or selective or a .compulsive affair, but a natural one

?Does Society have an Essential and Independent Existence

point

Society is composed of individuals, without individuals a society does not exist. What is the manner of this synthesis? How is an individual related to society, and what kind of :relationship is it? Let us take into consideration the following views

First View

Society is constituted of individuals. This is merely a hypostatized synthesis i.e. a synthesis does not exist in reality. An objective synthesis takes place when a series of elements influence one another, and when there is a reciprocal and mutual relation of action and reaction between the elements. These actions and reactions prepare the ground for the emergence of a new phenomenon with its own specific. Characteris‐ .tics, as observed in the case of a chemical synthesis

For example, due to the action and reaction of the two gases, oxygen and hydrogen, for example, a new compound, namely, water, is produced with a new form and a new set of properties. The essential condition for a real synthesis is that the

constituent elements are merged into one another in the process of synthesis, giving up their individual nature and properties, to bring into existence a new substance: the .compound

In collective life, human beings never merge with one another in this way, and a society does

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not represent anything like a `unified man'. Thus, society does not possess an essential and independent existence, but a secondary and a hypostatized one. It is the individual alone who has independent, real, and essential existence. So, although human life in society does have a collective form and colour, but members of society .'do not merge to form a real compound called `society

Second View

In reality, society cannot be compared to the natural compounds, it is an artificial compound. An artificial compound is a kind of compound although it is not a natural one. An artificial compound, like a machine, is a system of interrelated parts. In a chemical compound, the constituent elements lose their identity, and dissolve in the `whole' and essentially lose their individuality. But in an artificial compound, the .components do not lose their identity; they just surrender their independence

The components are interconnected and related in such a way that the effect of the resultant product is quite different from the sum total of the individual effects of its ingredients. For example, an automobile carries persons or things with a great speed from one place to another. Its mobility and speed cannot be attributed to the sum of individual performance of its parts when considered as independent and .disconnected from one another

There is a sort of coordination and coherence between its parts, which is artificial and imposed from without. However, merger of identities of the ingredients in the `whole' does not take place. Yet, the whole does not

exist without its constituent parts. The whole is the sum total of its parts in addition to .the specific connections and relations among them

Society, in the same manner, is comprised of several primary and secondary organizations and bodies. These organizations and the individuals who are connected with them, all are inseparably related with one another. Any changes in any one of these institutions cultural, religious, economic, legal or educational bring about changes in other institutions also. Thus, social life is a phenomenon dependent on the social machinery. But in this process, neither the identity of individuals nor that of .institutions is dissolved completely in the society as a whole

Third View

Society is a real compound like the natural compounds. But the synthesis here is of minds and thoughts and of wills and wishes; the synthesis is cultural and not physical. Like the material elements, which in the process of action and reaction, reduction and dissolution in one another, prepare the ground for the emergence of a new substance, and due to this re…organization a new compound comes into existence and the elements continue their existence with a new identity, individuals also, who enter into social life with their gifts acquired from nature and their inborn abilities, spiritually merge into one another to attain a new spiritual identity, which is termed the `social .'spirit

This synthesis itself is unique and special, with no parallel in the universe. Since the components do affect and influence one another and are transformed by mutual effect to

acquire a new personality, this synthesis is a natural and real synthesis. However, in this case, the `whole' or the `compound' does not exist as a single physical entity. It is different from other compounds in the sense that in other natural compounds the synthesis is physical and the components influence and affects one another to the

extent of acquiring a totally new identity, and the compound becomes a single indivisible entity, a real unit. The multiplicity of constituents is dissolved and .transformed into the unity of the compound

But in the synthesis of society and individual, though an actual synthesis takes place because, the constituents, the individuals, as a result of their interaction, attain a new form and identity the plurality of individuals is not converted into a unity. This synthesis does not produce anything like a `unified man', a physical entity in which all individuals have physically merged. Society conceived as a single physical entity is .only a hypostatized abstraction

Fourth View

Society is a real compound of a higher order than a natural compound. In the case of natural compounds, the constituents have their own individuality and identity before the synthesis occurs. During the process of their action and reaction, conditions for emergence of a new substance are produced. However, the human individual did not .possess any kind of individuality at the stage of pre…social existence

At that stage, he is like an empty container capable only of embracing the social spirit. ,Without social existence, human beings are absolutely like animals

with the only difference that they possess human aptitudes. The humanity of a human being i.e. his feeling of being a human being, his consciousness of his human `egohood', thought, human likes and dislikes, and other emotions and feelings .associated with man originates under the influence of the social spirit

It is the social spirit that fills this empty pot and confers personality upon a person. The social spirit has always been co…existing with man and shall co…exist with him forever through its manifestations such as morality, religion, education, philosophy, and art. The cultural and spiritual causes and effects, actions and reactions among .the individuals take a specific shape due to the influence of the social spirit

Hence, they are not prior to it. In fact sociology is prior to human psychology. This view is contrary to the former view, which accepts the possibility of human psychology even before the stage of social existence, and regards sociology as belonging to a later development. According to this view, if man had not acquired social existence and sociology, he would not have reached the stage of acquiring .human psyche and human psychology

The first theory is a theory maintaining the priority of individual because, according to it, neither society has a real existence, nor law, custom nor social destiny have an independent reality. Only individuals have an objective existence and are knowable objects in an epistemological sense. The life and destiny of every individual is .independent of that of other individuals

The second theory

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is also a theory of the priority of individual. It does not recognize the society as an independent `whole', and also denies an objective synthesis of individuals as a necessary condition of social existence. But it considers the relationship among .individuals as somewhat objective, although confined to physical association

According to this theory, whereas society does not have an existence independent of individuals, the individual alone has a real and objective existence. But according to this view, individuals, being the constituents of a society, share a common destiny just as the components of a machine or an automobile are related and linked together in the form of a mechanical association of cause and effect, their movements being mechanically interlinked. Moreover, society…that is the group of inter related and interconnected individuals…from the point of view of its specific system of mechanical .cause…and…effect relationships, has an identity independent of its individual parts

The third theory, however, emphasizes the reality of individual as well as that of society. This theory recognizes the independent existence of individuals because, according to it, the existence of components of society (individuals) is not merged into

the existence of society. It, also, does not accept any unified existence for society like that of chemical compounds. At the same time, it recognizes the objective reality of society, because it considers the synthesis of individuals similar to a chemical .synthesis with regard to their spiritual and intellectual makeup

As a result of this synthesis, individuals acquire a new identity, which is

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the dominant character of society…although society is not a physically unified entity. On the basis of this theory, due to the process of interaction between the parts, an entirely new entity has emerged: a new spirit, a new consciousness, and a new will, which is over and above the intelligence, consciousness and will of the individuals, and .which dominates the intelligence and consciousness of all its individual members

The fourth theory believes in the essentiality and absoluteness of social reality. According to this theory, whatever exists is the collective spirit, the collective consciousness, the collective sensibility, the collective will, and the collective `self'. Individual consciousness is nothing but a manifestation of the collective .consciousness

The Qur’anic View

The verses of the Holy Qur’an confirm the third view. As I have stated earlier, the Qur’an does not discuss human problems in our philosophical and scientific terminology. Its language and approach is different. Nevertheless, the Qur’an views the problems concerning society in such a way that it supports the third view. The Qur’an puts forward the idea of a common history, a common destiny, a common record of deeds, a common consciousness, understanding, sensibility and a common (conduct for the ummahs (societies) (۱

It is obvious that if the entity referred to as `ummah' did not have an objective existence, it would be meaningless to talk of fate, understanding, conscience, obedience, and disobedience with reference to it. It may be inferred that the Qur’an .believes in a certain kind of life which is the collective and social existence

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.Allamah Tabataba'i, al-Mizan, vol. II, p. ۱۰۲` -۱

Collective life is not just a metaphor or an allegory, it is a reality likewise collective .death is also a reality

:In verse ۳۴ of Surat al-'A`raf, the Qur’an asserts

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

And every ummah (society) hath its term, and when its term cometh, they cannot put“ (it off an hour nor yet advance (it).” (۷:۳۴

This verse refers to life and existence that is given a limited period of time, the duration of which cannot be changed. The end can neither be advanced nor delayed; and this life is associated with the nation (ummah), not with the individuals; or else it is evident that individuals of a nation are deprived of their existence individually and .separately and not collectively and simultaneously

:In Surat al-Jathiyah, the verse ۲۸ states

كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَىٰ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِهَا .

.Every ummah (society) shall be summoned to its record“

(۴۵:۲۸) ”

Thereupon we come to know that not only individuals have a particular record of deeds of their own, but societies are also judged by their own records of deeds, because they, too, are like living beings who are conscious, responsible, and .accountable for their acts, as they have freedom of will and act accordingly

:In Surat al-'An`am, verse ۱۰۸ states

زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ

(Unto every nation have we made their deeds seem fair" (۶:۱۰۸"

This verse affirms that every nation evolves its own particular consciousness, its own particular standards and its own particular way of thinking. The consciousness, understanding, and perception of every nation has a specific and

.distinguishable character

Every nation judges things according to its own standards (at least in the matters involving practical values and notions every nation has its own special way of perception and comprehension. There are many acts which are `good' in the eyes of one nation and `evil' in the eyes of another. It is the social atmosphere that moulds .the taste and perception of the individuals of a nation according to its value...system

:In Surat al...Mu'min, verse ۵ says

وَ هَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ لِيَأْخُذُوهُ وَجَادَلُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ فَأَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ

And every nation purposed to seize their messenger and argued falsely, [thinking]...."
(thereby to refute the Truth. Then I seized, and how [awful] was my punishment. "(۴۰:۵

This verse is about an unrighteous resolution and decision of a nation. It refers to a collective decision of immoral opposition to truth, and asserts that collective .disobedience deserves collective retribution and punishment

In the Qur'an, there are frequent instances how the actions of an individual are attributed to the whole group, or sins of a generation are associated with later (generations. (۱

In such cases, the people had the same (collective) thinking and the same (collective) will, or, in other words, they had the same social spirit. For example, in the story of the Thamud, the act of hamstringing Salih's camel, which was the deed of an individual .(they hamstrung the she camel) فَعَقَرُوهَا alone, is attributed to the whole nation

The whole nation was considered to be responsible for the crime. Consequently all of them

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۱- Following Qur'anic verses are referred to: فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ "Woe, then, to those who write the Book with their hands and then say: This is from God, so that they may take for it a small price. Therefore, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn." (۲: ۷۹) ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا وَّكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ "Abasement shall be pitched on them, wherever they are come upon, except they be in a bond of God, and a bond of the people; they will be laden with the burden of God's anger, and poverty shall be pitched on them; that, because they disbelieved in God's signs and slew the Prophets without right, that, for that they acted rebelliously and were transgressors." (۳:۱۱۲)

were considered to deserve the punishment for committing that crime فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُم (so Allah doomed them for that sin).

Ali (as), in one of the sermons of the Nahj al…balaghah, elucidates this subject in the' following manner:

أَيُها النّاسُ إِنّما يَجْمَعُ النّاسَ الرِضا وَ السَخَطُ.

O people, actually that which brings together a community [and imparts unity and a common fate to it], is the common feeling of approval and disapproval.

Whenever any proper or improper action having collective approval has been performed, even though by a single individual, the whole society is held responsible for it.

إِنَّما عَقَرَ ناقَةَ ثَمُود رَجُلٌ واحِدٌ فَعَمَّهُمْ اللهُ بالعَذابِ لما عَمّوهُ بِالرِضّا فَقالَ فَعَقَرُوها فَأَصْبَحُوا نادِمين.

Indeed only one man had hamstrung the she…camel of Thamud, but God included

them all in His punishment, because they all condoned his act. So, God has said (in the ".Qur'an) "They hamstrung her and woke up repentant

God sent down His punishment collectively on the people of Thamud, because the whole nation maintained the same position and approved the act of one individual, and when his decision was enacted, it was actually the decision of the whole nation. God, in His Book, has attributed the act of hamstringing of the camel to the whole nation, although the act was performed by one person. It says: "That nation hamstrung the camel," and does not say that one person from among them .committed the sin

It is essential to remind here that mere approval of a sin, as long as it

remains a verbal approval alone and practical involvement has not occurred, is not to be considered as a sin. For example, a person commits a sin and another comes to know about it before or after its committal and approves it, even though the approval leads to the stage of resolution but is not translated into action, it is not a sin as the resolution of an individual to commit a sin, which is not translated into action may not .be considered a sin

An approval is considered as participation in sin when it plays an active role in its planning and execution. The collective sins belong to this category. The social atmosphere and the social spirit favour the occurrence of the sin and support it. If one of the members of a society whose approval is a part of the collective will and whose decision is a part of the collective decision commits the sin, it is here that the sin of an individual becomes the collective sin. The above quoted passage of the Nahj al...balaghah which refers to the contents of the Qur'anic verse, explains the same fact. It is not merely the approval or disapproval which is regarded as participation in .the intention or committal of a sin

The Qur'an occasionally associates the acts of an earlier generation with the latter generations. For example, the action of an earlier nation, namely the people of Israel,

has been associated with the Israelites of the Prophet's age, and the Qur'an says

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that these people deserve ignominy and wretchedness because they slew prophets unjustly. It is not so because in the view of the Qur'an they were the offspring of the same race, but because they represented the same evil social spirit. It has been said that "human society has more dead than living. (۱)

It means that those who are dead participate in the formation of every age more than the living. Therefore, it is also said that "the dead rule the living more than before." (۲)

In the Qur'anic exegesis, al…Mizan, it is argued that if a society has a single soul and the same social thinking, it is as if a single individual. In this case, members of society are like the bodily organs and faculties of one organism, intrinsically and physically united, and are amalgamated in the form of a single human personality in thought and action. Their pleasures and pains are like the pleasures and pains of one person and their bliss and adversities are like the bliss and adversities of one person. This discussion is further continued on the following lines:

In its judgement on nations and societies having religious or national prejudices or having a unique social thinking, the Qur'an regards the latter generations punishable for the actions of the earlier generations. A present generation is regarded accountable and punishable for the actions of those who have passed away. In the cases in which people had the same social thinking and the same social spirit, the Divine Judgement

p: ۲۱

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۱ – Auguste Comte, as quoted in Raymond Aron's Main Currents in Sociological Thought, vol. I, p. ۹۱.

۲– Ibid.

could not be otherwise. (۱)

point

If society has real existence, it should naturally possess laws peculiar to it. If we accept the first theory about the nature of society (which we have already discussed) and reject the existence of society as a real entity, naturally we have to admit that society lacks laws which may govern it. And if we accept the second theory and believe in artificial and mechanical composition of society, then we would have to admit that society is governed by laws but that its laws are confined to a series of mechanical and causal relationships between its various parts, without the .distinguishing features and particular characteristics of life and living organisms

And if we accept the third point of view, we shall have to accept, firstly, that society itself has a comparatively more permanent existence independent of the existence of individuals although this collective life has no separate existence, and is distributed and dispersed among its individual members, and incarnates itself in their existence. It has discoverable laws and traditions more permanent and stable than those of the .individuals, who are its components

Secondly, we shall have to accept also that the components of society, which are human individuals, contrary to the mechanistic point of view, lose their independent identity…although in a relative fashion to produce an organically composite structure. But at the same time the relative independence of the individual is preserved because individual life, individual nature, and individual achievements are not dissolved totally

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.Al…Mizan, vol. IV, ١١٢ -١

.in the collective existence

According to this point of view, man actually lives with two separate existences, two souls, and two "selves." On the one hand, there are the life, soul, and self of the human being, which are the products of the processes of his essential nature; on the

other, there are the collective life, soul, and self which are the products of social life, and pervade the individual self. On this basis, biological laws, psychological laws, and sociological laws, together, govern human beings. But according to the fourth theory, .only a single type of laws governs man, and these are the social laws alone

Among the Muslim scholars `Abd al…Rahman ibn Khaldun of Tunisia was the first and the foremost Islamic thinker to discuss clearly and explicitly the laws governing the society in independence from the laws governing the individual. Consequently he asserted that the society itself had a special character, individuality, and reality. In his famous introduction to history, he has discussed this theory in detail. Among the modern scholars and thinkers Montesquieu (the French philosopher of the eighteenth century A.D.) is the first to discuss the laws which control and govern human groups .and societies. Raymond Aron says about Montesquieu

His purpose was to make history intelligible. He sought to understand historical truth. But historical truth appeared to him in the form of an almost limitless diversity of morals, customs, ideas, laws, and institutions. His inquiry's point of departure was precisely this seemingly incoherent diversity. The goal of

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the inquiry should have been the replacement of this incoherent diversity by a conceptual order. One might say that Montesquieu, exactly like Max Weber, wanted to proceed from the meaningless fact to an intelligible order. This attitude is precisely (the one peculiar to the sociologist. (۱

It means that a sociologist has to reach beyond the apparently diverse social forms and phenomena, which seem to be alien to one another, to reveal the unity in diversity in order to prove that all the diverse manifestations refer to the one and the same reality. In the same way, all the similar social events and phenomena have their origin in a similar sequence of analogous causes. Here is a passage from the .observations on the causes of the rise and fall of the Romans

It is not fortune that rules the world. We can ask the Romans, who had a constant

series of success when they followed a certain plan, and an uninterrupted sequence of disasters when they followed another. There are general causes, whether moral or physical ....which operate in every monarchy, to bring about its rise, its duration and its fall. All accidents are subject to these causes, and if the outcome of a single battle, i.e. a particular cause, was the ruin of a state, there was a general cause which decreed that that state was destined to perish through a single battle. In short, the main impulse carries all the particular accidents along with it. (۲)

The Holy Qur'an explains

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۱- Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, vol. I, p. ۱۴.

۲- Ibid.

that nations and societies qua nations and societies (not just individuals living in societies) have common laws and principles that govern their rise and fall in accordance with certain historical process. The concept of a common fate and collective destiny implies the existence of certain definite laws governing the society. About the tribe of Bani Israel, the Qur'an says:

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَا أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُم بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا إِنْ أَحْسَنتُمْ أَحْسَنتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا

And we decreed for the Children of Israel in the scriptures: You verily will work corruption in the earth twice, and you will become great tyrants. So when the time for the first of the two came We roused against you slaves of Ours of great might who ravaged [your] country, and it was a threat performed.' [After you had regretted your sins and became pious again] Then we gave once again your turn against them, and we aided you with wealth and children and mode you more in soldiery.

[Saying] If ye do good, ye do good for your own souls, and if ye do evil, it is for them.

(I.e. Our laws and customs are fixed and constant, it

is by this covenant that people are bestowed with power, might, honour and constancy or subjected to humiliation and abjectness). So when the time for the second [of the judgements] came, because of your acts of tyranny and despotism, we aroused against you others [of our slaves] to ravage you, and to enter the temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting. It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you [if ye mend your ways], but if you repeat [the crime] we shall repeat [the punishment], and we have appointed (hell a dungeon for the disbelievers. (۱۷:۴...۸

The last sentence, i.e. "But if you repeat [the crime] we shall repeat [the punishment]" .shows that the Qur'an is addressing all the people of the tribe and not an individual

.It also implies that all the societies are governed by a universal law

Determinism or Freedom

One of the fundamental problems discussed by philosophers, particularly in the last century, is the problem of determinism and freedom of individual as against society, or, in other words, determinism and freedom of the individual spirit vis-à-vis the social spirit. If we accept the first theory regarding the nature of society, and consider social structure to be merely a hypostatized notion, and believe in the absolute independence of the individual, then there will be no place for the idea of social .determinism

Because, there will be no power or force except that of the individuals, and

no social force that may rule over the individual. Hence, in this theory, there is no room for the idea of social determinism. If there is any compulsion or determinism it is of the individual and operates through the individuals. The society has no role in this

matter. Hence, there can be no social determinism as emphasized by the advocates .of social determinism

In the same way, if we accept the fourth theory, and consider the individual and individual's personality as a raw material or an empty pot, then the entire human personality of the individual, his intellect, and his free will would be reduced to nothing but an expression of the collective intelligence and the collective will, which manifest themselves, as an illusion, in the form of an individual to realize their own social ends. Accordingly, if we accept the idea of the absolute essentiality and primariness of the society, there will be no place left for the idea of the freedom and choice of the .individual

Emile Durkheim, the famous French sociologist, emphasizes the importance of society to the extent of saying that social matters (in fact all the human matters, as against the biological and animal urges and needs, like eating and sleeping) are the products of society, not the products of individual thought and will, and have three .characteristics they are external, compulsive, and general

They are considered to be external, because they are alien to individual existence and are imposed from without upon the individual by

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society. They existed before the individual came into existence and the individual accepted them under the…influence of society. Acceptance of the moral, social, and religious traditions, customs, and values by the individual comes under this category. They are compulsive, because they impose themselves upon the individual and mould the individual's conscience, feelings, thoughts, and preferences according to their .own standards

Because of being compulsive, they are necessarily general and universal. However, if we accept the third theory and consider both the individual and the society as fundamental entities…although admitting the power of the society as dominating that of the individual…it does not necessitate any compulsion or determinism for the

.individual either in human or social affairs

Durkheimian determinism arises due to the failure to recognize the essential nature of the human being. Man's nature gives him a kind of freedom and liberty that empower him to revolt against social compulsions. On this basis, we may say that there is an intermediary relationship between the individual and the society that lies between the extremes of absolute freedom and absolute compulsion (amr bayn .(al…'amrayn

Although the Holy Qur'an attributes character, personality, reality, power, life, death, consciousness, obedience, and disobedience to society, it also explicitly recognizes the possibility of violation of social law by an individual. The Qur'an in this matter relies .'on what is termed as the (Fitrat Allah) 'Divine nature

In Surat al Nisa, The verse ٩٧ refers to a group of people who called themselves "mustad'afun" (the oppressed and the weak) in

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the society of Mecca, and took shelter in their `weakness and being oppressed' as an excuse for shirking their natural responsibilities. In fact, they considered themselves helpless as against the social compulsion and pressures. The Qur'an says that their excuse cannot be condoned on any ground, because at least they were free to migrate from the Meccan society to another one better suited for the fulfillment of :their aspirations. Elsewhere it states

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ

لَا يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ

..

"O believers! You have charge of your own souls. He who goes astray cannot injure you if you are rightly guided." (۵:۱۰۵)

The famous verse (۷:۱۷۲) regarding human nature states that man is bound by the Divine covenant to believe in monotheism (tawhid), and it has been made inherent in human nature. The Qur'an says further that it is ordained in this way so that people should not say on the Day of Judgement that "our fathers were idolaters and we did not have any other alternative except helplessly adhering to the faith of our fore-fathers." (۷:۱۷۳) (۱)

With such a nature gifted to man by God, there is no compulsion to accept any faith contrary to the Divine will and to human nature itself.

The teachings of the Qur'an are entirely based upon the notion of human responsibility man is responsible for himself and for society. The dictum al-'amr bil ma`ruf wa al-nahy `an al-munkar (commanding others to do what is commanded by God and forbidding them from that which is prohibited

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۱- Following verses are referred to : وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِی آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَهِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَٰذَا غَافِلِينَ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّهً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this. [Or you should say: Only our fathers associated others (with Allah) before, and we were an offspring after them: Wilt Thou then destroy us for what the vain doers did? (۷:۱۷۲-۱۷۳)

by Him), is a command to the individual to revolt against social corruption and destructiveness.

This is the Qur'anic code of conduct prescribed for the individual to save society from chaos, disorder, and destruction. Tales and stories embodied in the text of the Qur'an

deal mostly with the theme of the individual's revolt against a corrupt social order. The stories of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Prophet Muhammad, the Companions of the Cave (Ashab al-Kahf), the believer of the tribe of the Pharaoh, etc. deal with the .same theme

The notion of social determinism is rooted in the misconception that society in its real composition needs complete merger of its constituent parts into one another and dissolution of their plurality into the unity of the `whole'. This process is considered to .be responsible for the emergence of a new reality

Either one has to accept that the personality, freedom, and independence of the individual are real, and so negate the reality of society and social structure (as in the case of the first and the second theories regarding the nature of society and the individual), or the reality of society is to be affirmed at the cost of the individual and his freedom and independence (as in the case of Durkheim's theory). Reconciliation between these two opposite viewpoints is impossible. As all the conjectures and arguments of sociology support the supremacy of society, the opposite view is .necessarily rejected

In fact, from a philosophical point of view, all forms of syntheses cannot be

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regarded similar. On the lower levels of nature, i.e. minerals and inorganic substances, which in philosophical terms are governed by a `simple force,' and as interpreted by the philosophers, act according to one and the same law, are synthesized in a way .that they completely merge into one another and lose their individuality in the whole

For example, in the composition of water, two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen are merged together, and both lose their individual properties. But at the higher level of synthesis, the parts usually retain a relative independence with respect to the whole. A kind of plurality in unity and unity in plurality manifests itself at higher levels of existence. As we see in man, despite his unity, a unique plurality is .manifested

Not only his lower faculties and powers preserve their plurality to some extent, but, at the same time, there is also a kind of continuous inherent opposition and conflict between his internal powers. Society is the strangest natural phenomenon in which all its constituent parts retain their individual independence to a maximum possible .degree

Hence, from this point of view, we have to accept that human beings, who are the constituent parts of a society in intellectual and volitional activity, retain their individual freedom, and, therefore, their individual existence precedes their social existence. In addition to this

fact, in the synthesis at the higher levels of nature, the generic character of the parts is preserved. The individual human being or the individual

spirit is not determined by the social spirit; it rather preserves its right to think and act .freely

Social Divisions and Polarization

Although society has a kind of unity, it is divided from within into different groups, strata and classes, which are occasionally opposite to one another. If not all, some of societies are divided into different and occasionally conflicting poles despite their apparent unity. Thus, in the words of Muslim philosophers, a specific type of `unity in plurality and plurality in unity' governs societies. In earlier chapters, while discussing the nature of the unity of society, we have elaborated what type of unity it is. Now we .shall discuss the nature of its inherent plurality

There are two well...known theories with regard to this problem. The first is the philosophy of historical materialism and dialectical contradictions. This theory, which would be discussed in detail later, is based upon the origin of private property. The societies in which the conception of private property does not exist are basically unipolar, such as the primitive communist societies or those communist societies .which are likely to be formed in the future

A society in which the right to private property. Exists is, of necessity, bipolar. Hence, society is either unipolar or bipolar. There is no third alternative possible. In bipolar societies, human beings are divided into two groups, viz. the exploiters and the exploited. Except these two opposite camps, i.e. the group of the rulers and the group of the ruled, any third group does not exist.

All the social modes, such as philosophy, morality, religion, and art, may also be divided according to the class character of the two groups.

There are, therefore, two types of philosophy, morality, religion, etc., each of which bears the specific economic class character of each group. Hypothetically, if there were only one philosophy, one religion, and one morality prevalent in a society, it too represents the character of any one of these two classes and is imposed on the other. But it is impossible to imagine the existence of a philosophy, art, religion or morality without having a character independent of the economic structure of society.

According to the other theory, the unipolar or multipolar characteristic of society has nothing to do with the principle of private ownership. The social, ideological, cultural, and racial factors, too, are responsible for giving rise to multipolar societies. The cultural and ideological factors, in particular, play the basic role; they are not only capable of producing bipolar or multipolar societies with occasionally contradictory poles but can also create a unipolar society without necessarily abolishing the institution of private ownership.

Now we have to discuss the view of the Qur'an regarding the plurality of society. Does the Qur'an affirm or negate social plurality? And if it affirms, what is its point of view about the polarization of society? Does the Qur'an affirm the bipol۴rization of society on the basis of ownership and exploitation, or does it forward some other view? The best or at least a good

method for determining the Qur’anic point of view seems to be that we should first of all extract the social terminology used in the Qur’an. In the light of the nature and meaning of the Qur’anic idiom we can infer the position of the Qur’an concerning this .matter

The social terminology used in the Qur’an is of two types: some of the words are related with a particular social phenomenon such as, millah (community), shari `ah (Divine Law), shir`ah (custom), minhaj (method), sunnah (tradition), and the like. These terms are not relevant to the present discussion. But a number of terms which refer to all or some human groups may be taken into account for discovering the .Qur’anic viewpoint

These words can reveal the point of view of the Qur’an. Such terms as qawm (folk), ummah (community), nas (mankind), shu`ub (peoples), qaba'il (tribes), rasul (messenger, apostle), nabi (prophet), imam (leader), wali (guardian), mu'min (believer), kafir (unbeliever), munafiq (dissenter or hypocrite), mushrik (polytheist), mudhabdhab (hesitant), muhajir (emigrant), mujahid (warrior), sadiq (truthful), shahid .((witness), muttaqi (pious), salih (righteous), muslih (reformer), mufsid (corrupter

Aamir bil ma'ruf (one who orders to obey God's command), nahi `an al…munkar (one who forbids indecent or illegitimate deeds), `alim (learned), nasih (admonishes), zalim (cruel, oppressive, unjust), khalifah (deputy), rabbani (Divine), rabbi (rabbi), kahin (priest), ruhban (monks), ahbar (Jewish scribes), jabbar (tyrant), `ali (sublime), mustali (superior), mustakbir (tyrant, proud), mustad`af (tyrannized, oppressed), musrif (lavish, prodigal), mutraf (affluent), taghut (idols), mala ` (chieftains), muluk (kings), ,(ghani (rich), faqir (poor, needy), mamluk (the ruled

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malik (owner, master), hurr (free, liberated), `abd (slave, servant), rabb (master, lord), .etc

Furthermore, there are other words which are apparently similar to these words, such as: musalli (one who prays), mukhlis (sincere, devoted), sadiq (loyal, true), munfiq

(charitable), mustaghfir (one who asks for God's forgiveness), ta'ib (penitent), abid .(adorer), hamid (one who praises), etc

But these words have been used only for the purpose of describing kinds of behaviour .and not to refer to certain social groups, poles, or classes

It is essential to study the connotation and meaning of the verses in which the terms referred to earlier are used, in particular the words related to social orientations. It is also to be seen whether the above mentioned terms can be divided into two distinct groups. And supposing that these terms refer to two distinct groups, it should be .determined who are their referents

For example, can all of them be classified in two groups of believers and unbelievers, according to a classification based on religious belief, or into two groups of the rich and the poor according to their economic position? In other words, it is to be analyzed whether these divisions are ultimately based on any one primary classification, and whether or not all the other sub...divisions are essentially secondary and relative. If .there is only one principle of division, it has to be determined

Some people claim that the Qur’anic view suggests a bipolar society. They say according to the Qur’an, society is divided into two classes: one

is the ruling, dominating, and exploiting class, and the other consists of the ruled, exploited, and subjugated people. The ruling class consists of those whom the Qur’an calls `mustakbirun', i.e. the arrogant oppressors and exploiters. The subjugated class .(is of those who are called by the Qur’an `mustad'afun' (the weakened

All other divisions, such as mu'min (believer) and kafir (unbeliever), muwahhid (monotheist) and mushrik (polytheist), salih (righteous) and fasid (corrupt) are secondary in nature. It means that it is tyranny and exploitation that leads to infidelity, idolatry, hypocrisy and other such evils, whereas, on the other hand, subjugation to oppression and exploitation leads towards iman (faith), hijrah (migration), jihad

.(struggle), salih (righteousness), islah (reform) and other such qualities

In other words, all such things which are regarded by the Qur’an as deviation and aberration in religion, morality, and deeds are rooted in the practice of exploitation and the economic privileges of a class. Similarly, the source and root of the attitudes and acts morally, religiously, and practically approved and emphasized by the Qur’an, lie in the condition of being exploited. Human consciousness is naturally determined by the material conditions of life. Without changing the material life of a people, it is .not possible to bring about any change in their spiritual, moral and psychic life

According to this viewpoint, the Qur’an perceives social conflicts as basically class conflicts. It means that the Qur’an gives essential priority to social and economic struggle over moral struggle. According to this interpretation, in the

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Qur’an, infidels, hypocrites, idolaters, the morally corrupt and the tyrants arise from among the groups whom the Qur’an names as mutraf (the affluent), musrif (extravagant and wasteful), mala' (ruling clique), muluk (kings), mustakbir (arrogant) .and so on. It is not possible for these groups to arise from among the opposite class

In the same way, they say, the prophets (anbiya'), messengers (mursalun), leaders (a'immah), upholders of truth (siddiqun), martyrs (shuhada'), warriors (mujahidun), emigrants (muhajirun) and believers (muminun) emerge from among the class of the oppressed and the weak. It is not possible that they may arise from the opposite class. So it is mainly istihbar (tyranny and arrogance) or istid`af (weakness, or condition of being oppressed) that mould and direct the social consciousness of the people. All the other social modes are products and manifestations of the struggle .between the exploiters and the exploited, and the oppressors and the oppressed

According to this viewpoint, the Qur’an not only considers the two above mentioned groups of people as manifestation and expression of the division of society into two classes of the mustakbirun and the mustad'afun, but it also divides human attributes .and dispositions into two sets

Truthfulness, forgiveness, sincerity, service, insight, vision, compassion, mercy, pity, generosity, humility, sympathy, nobility, sacrifice, fear of God, etc. constitute one set of positive values on the other hand, falsehood, treachery, debauchery, hypocrisy, sensuality, cruelty, callousness, stupidity, avarice and pride etc. constitute another set of values, which are negative. The first sets of attributes are ascribed to the

.oppressed class and the second set is considered to characterize the oppressors

Hence, they say, oppression and subjugation not only give rise to opposite groups, but they are also the fountainheads of conflicting moral qualities and habits. The position of a class either as oppressor or oppressed is the basis and foundation not only of all human attitudes, loyalties, and preferences, but also of all cultural and social .phenomena and manifestations

The morality, philosophy, art, literature, and religion originating in the class of oppressors always manifest and represent its character and social attitude. All of them support and justify the status quo, and cause stagnation and decadence by arresting social progress. On the other hand, the philosophy, art, literature, and religion originating from the class of the oppressed are dynamic and revolutionary, .and generate new awareness

The class of the oppressors, i.e. the mustakabirun, because of its hegemony over social privileges, is obscurantist, traditionalist, and seeks shelter under the shadow of conservatism; whereas the class of the oppressed is endowed with vision, and is anti-.traditionalist, progressive, zealous, active, and is always in the vanguard of revolution

In brief, according to the advocates of this theory, the Qur’an affirms the view that it is actually the economic structure of a society which makes a man, determines his group…identity and his attitudes, and lays down the foundation of his thinking, morality, religion, and ideology. They quote a number of verses from the Qur’an to show that what they teach is, on the whole, based

.upon the Qur'an

According to this view, commitment to a particular class is the measure and test of all things. All the beliefs are to be evaluated by this standard. The claims and assertions of a believer, a reformer, and even a prophet or a spiritual leader, can be confirmed or .rejected only through this test

This theory is in fact a materialistic interpretation of both man and society. No doubt the Qur'an gives a special importance to the social allegiances of individuals, but does it mean that the Qur'an interprets all distinctions and classifications on the basis of social classes? In my view such an interpretation of society, man, and the world is not .consistent with the Islamic world view

It is a conclusion drawn from a superficial study of the problems discussed in the Qur'an. However, since we shall discuss this matter fully in a later chapter dealing with history under the title "Is History Materialistic in Nature?" I shall abstain from .further elaboration at this point

?Nature of Society: Homogeneity or Heterogeneity

An answer to this problem, too, as indicated earlier, is essential for every school of thought because only a discussion of this problem can throw light on an important issue whether all human societies can follow one and the same ideology, or if there must be a multiplicity of ideologies based upon various types of societies i.e. should each nation, community, civilization, and culture necessarily possess a particular ?ideology

Ideology means the sum total of the general schemes and means which can

lead a society towards the attainment of perfection and its summum bonum (the highest good). We also know that every species calls for specific qualities, conditions,

and capacities; that which represents the `highest good' in the case of a horse is not .identical with that of a sheep or a man

Hence, if all societies assuming their objective existence......should share the same essence and nature, they could also, possibly, share a single ideology. Their mutual differences being like those among members of the same species, any living ideology can be applied to them, allowing within its framework adjustments for individual diffe... rence according to the varying aptitudes of its members. But if societies have different natures and essences, they naturally call for different programmes, plans, ideals, and varying summum bonum particular to each. In this case, one single .ideology cannot be applied to all of them

A similar problem applies to the changes and mutations of societies over long periods of time. Do societies change their nature and essence in the course of changes and mutations, in the same way as species are transformed in the process of evolution? Does such a process of transformation occur on the level of societies? Or if the social changes are like changes in the circumstance of an individual of a certain species, whose nature and generic characteristics are preserved in the midst of all changes ?and transitions

The first issue is related to sociology, whereas the second one is connected with history. We shall discuss the first

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problem at present and postpone the discussion of the second until we take into .account the nature of history

Can sociological studies reveal whether or not there are some common characteristics among various societies? Are the differences among them only secondary and superficial, resulting from factors extraneous to the essence and nature of society, which itself remains unchanged? Or is it true that human societies are basically different in essence and nature, and even if supposedly similar from the point of view of external conditions, they function in intrinsically different ways?

These alternative views are suggested by philosophy in its effort to disentangle .obscurities surrounding the formal unity or plurality of things

There is a shorter route also, and that is man himself. It is an established fact about man that Homo sapiens are the only species that has not shown any biological mutation from the very beginning of its emergence. Some thinkers say that as the process of evolution of living organisms culminated in the emergence of human being, nature altered its course and diverted the movement of evolution from the biological to the social course, and from the process of physiological evolution to that of spiritual .and intellectual development

In an earlier chapter, while discussing the question "Is man gregarious?" we came to the conclusion that man who is a single species is ordained by nature itself to be gregarious and sociable. That is man's intrinsic and inherent gregariousness that ,manifests itself in the form of society and the collective spirit

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is derived from the essential nature of the human species. Man has social inclinations .because through them he can attain the kind of perfection of which he is capable

His gregarious propensity secures for him the ground for the collective spirit, which is itself a means to attain the end self perfection. Accordingly, it is human nature itself that determines the course taken by the collective spirit. In other words, the collective spirit serves human nature. As long as man exists, human nature would carry on its activity, supporting and encouraging his social spirit. The collective spirit is derived, therefore, from the individual spirit, which in turn is effused from human nature. Man is a single species, so human societies, also, have the same nature, substance, and .essence

However, as in case of individual, who can deviate from the course of nature and is occasionally even dehumanized, a society may also be diverted from its natural course and be dehumanized. The variety in societies is quite similar to diversity in individual morals, which are, in any case, not outside the sphere of human nature.

Thus, societies, civilizations, cultures, and, finally, social spirits that govern societies, in spite of the differences in characters and forms, have ultimately a human character .and not a non…human nature

If we agree? With the fourth theory about the synthesis of society, and consider individual as only passive, receptive matter, an empty container without any content, it would be tantamount to a negation of the human nature. We may

propound a hypothesis concerning diversity of nature and essence among societies, but this point of view in the form of Durkheimian theory is not at all acceptable; .because it leaves the very fundamental question unanswered

If the origin of the collective or social spirit does not lie inside individuals, and if it does not spring from the natural and biological aspect of human beings, then where does it come from? Does the social spirit come from absolute nothingness? Is it sufficient for the explanation of the social spirit to say that society has existed as long as man has ?existed

In addition to this, Durkheim believes that social phenomena such as religion, mora… lity, crafts, art etc. are the products of its social spirit, which have been, are and would remain the expressions of the social spirit, and thus have `temporal durability' and `spatial extensibility.' This itself is a proof that Durkheim implicitly believes that all .societies have a singular essence and nature, which manifests itself in the social spirit

The teachings of Islam emphasize absolute unity of religion, and consider difference in religious codes and traditions as secondary, and not essential and primary. We also know that religion is nothing except a programme for perfection of the individual and society. It also reveals that foundation of these teachings have been laid upon an assumption of the unity of societies. If there were various `species' of societies, then the ends of perfection and their respective means would have been also diverse, necessitating

.a diversity and plurality of religions

The Qur’an repeatedly stresses that there is not more than one single faith throughout the world. There has been one religion in all regions, in all societies and at all times. According to the Qur’an, religions…in the plural form…have had no existence; only “Religion” (in its singular form) has existed. All prophets preached and taught the :same faith, the same path, and the same purpose

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِى أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ ۖ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ ۚ

He has ordained for you the religion that He charged Noah with, and that we have“ revealed to thee, and that we charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus, (saying), (establish the religion and be not divided therein…..” (۴۲:۱۳

The verses of the Qur’an which prove that the faith remains the same at all times, in all regions, and in the scriptures of all true prophets of God, are numerous. The difference lies only in certain rules and ordinances, according to the relative stages of development or backwardness of societies. The logic that there is essentially no more than one religion is based on the outlook about man and society that mankind is one and a single species and those men are not different in their human essence. In the same way, human society, as an objective entity, represents a single species, not a .plurality of kinds

Societies of the Future

If the present societies, civilizations, and cultures are not to

be considered as belonging to diverse species, it cannot be denied that they have different forms and colours. What about their future? Will these cultures, civilizations, societies, and nations continue to exist in their present form, or is humanity moving

towards a certain unified culture, civilization, and society? Will they abandon their own specific individuality in the future, in order to assume one common character…a ?character that is closer to their real human nature

This problem is also associated with the problem of nature and essence of society, and the type of relationship between the collective and the individual spirits. Evidently, on the basis of the theory of man's primordial nature…according to which his social existence, his social life and, as a result, the social spirit are the means chosen by human nature to attain its own ultimate perfection it may be said that societies, cultures, and civilizations are moving towards homogeneity and unification, and .ultimately would merge into one another

The future of human societies lies in a highly developed, single and universal society, in which all positive human values shall be realized. Man shall attain true perfection .and shall finally realize his own authentic humanity

According to the Qur'an, it is evident that the ultimate rule shall be the rule of righteousness, which would lead to complete annihilation of falsehood and evil. .(Eternity belongs to the pious and the God-fearing (muttaqun

:In his Qur'anic exegesis, Al Mizan(١), `Allamah Tabataba'i holds that

Any profound examination of the conditions of the universe shows that

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Al…Mizan, vol. IV, p. ١٠۶ -١

man, as a part of the universe, shall realize his ultimate perfection in the future. The statement of the Qur'an that establishment of Islam in the world is a necessary and an inevitable matter, is just another way of saying that man shall ultimately attain to :complete perfection. The Qur'an says

مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِى اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

Whosoever of you turns from his religion, (know that in his stead) God will assuredly" bring a people He loves and who love Him (for the purpose of communicating and for (establishing God's religion)." (۵:۵۴

Here the Qur'an aims to describe the purpose of creation of man and his ultimate :future, which, in another verse, is explained in the following words

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا

God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will" surely make you successors in the earth, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them which He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after fear (by destroying their enemies). They shall serve Me, not ascribing with me anything (as partners)..." ((۲۴:۵۵)

:Similarly in another place it states

...أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

(My righteous servants will inherit the earth." (۲۱:۱۰۵...."

In the same book, under the title "The Frontiers of the Islamic

World are Faith, not Conventional or Geographical Borders", it is said, Islam has annulled the role of tribal and national distinctions, and denied them any effective role in the evolution of [the structure] of human society. There are two main factors responsible for these divisions. One is the primitive tribal life, which is based on .genealogical associations, and the other is geographical and regional diversity

These two main factors are responsible for division of humanity into various nations and tribes, giving rise to racial, linguistic, and colour differences. Also, these two factors are responsible for a nation's loyalty to a particular region; every nation calls

.'its territory its homeland and is prepared to defend it in the name of `the motherland

Though it is a natural human urge to be identified with one's group, but it is, at the same time, opposed to the demand of man's nature that mankind should live as a `whole' or as a single unit. The laws of nature are based on bringing together .scattered elements by creating harmony and establishing unity in place of diversity

By means of this, nature achieves its ends. This fact is evident from the natural course of evolution, which shows how primordial matter is transformed into different elements and then how elements are combined together to evolve plants, and then .animals, and finally culminate in the emergence of man

Although the regional and tribal diversity unifies members of a particular region or tribe and imparts them unity, it also brings one

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unit into confrontation against other such units. As a result, although the members of a nation have the feeling of fraternity among themselves, they tend to regard other peoples who are treated as `things' and not as human beings with hostility to them .the outsiders are mere means whose value lies only in their practical utility

This is the reason why Islam abrogated tribal and national diversity of men (which divides humanity into sections), and laid the foundation of human society on conviction and belief (in which the opportunity to discover the truth is equal for every individual), and not on race, nationality, or native soil. Even in affairs of matrimony and inheritance, Islam made common belief and conviction the criterion for human (relations. (۱

In the same book, under the title "The Religion of Truth is Ultimately Victorious", :`Allamah Tabataba'i says

Mankind, which has been endowed by nature with an urge to attain self perfection and true felicity, strives collectively to achieve the highest stages of material and spiritual evolution, which it would, positively, achieve some day. Islam, the religion of

tawhid (monotheism), is in fact a programme of attainment of such an end or .(summum bonum (sa`adah

The deviations that hinder man from traversing his long path, should not lead us to a negation of his nature and of his humanity. It is the sole natural law that actually governs human nature. The deviations and faults should be considered as a kind of .error in application of the natural law

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۱- ۱۳۲, ۱۳۳ .Ibid, pp

The objective of attaining perfection, for which man aspires, is directed by his restless, perfection…loving nature itself…an end which he is likely to attain sooner or :later one day. Some verses in Surat al…Rum (۳۰…۴۱), which start with the verse

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَکَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا

فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِی فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

lead us to the same conclusion that the demand of the law لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ And end with shall ultimately be fulfilled, and man, after wandering in different directions and .experimenting with different ways, shall finally discover his own path and adhere to it

One should not pay any attention to the opinions of those who say that Islam, like other cultural movements, has fulfilled its function as a phase in the development of human culture and is now an outdated part of history. Islam, as we know it and as we have already discussed it, aims at the ultimate perfection of man, which in accordance (with the laws of nature, has to be achieved one day.(۱

Contrarily, some people claim that Islam has never favoured the unity and unification of human culture and human societies. Islam has always, they say, favoured diversity and variety in cultures and societies, and this diversity and plurality is not only

recognized, but it is also reinforced by Islam. They say the personality, the nature, and the `self' of a nation are synonymous with its culture, which is the manifestation .of its social spirit

,And this social spirit is moulded by the specific history of that nation

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.Ibid, p. ۱۴ -۱

which distinguishes it from other nations, who do not share it. Nature has moulded man's specific essence history shapes his culture, and, in reality, moulds his personality, character, and his `selfhood.' Every nation possesses a particular culture compatible with its particular nature, taste, perfume, and essence. This culture not .only affirms the personality of that nation, but also safeguards its distinct identity

As in the case of individuals, whose individuality and personality is an inseparable part of his self, the loss of which means distortion of personality and alienation from one's own self, so also imposition of any other culture except the one evolved by a nation .through the course of history and which affirms its selfhood, causes self alienation

The fact that every nation has a particular sensibility, vision, orientation, preferences, tastes, literature, music, customs, etiquette and rituals, and prefers certain ways, contrary to those accepted by other nations is an outcome of its history, during which, due to various causes arising from its successes, failures, achievements, frustrations, climate, migrations, contacts, connections, and its eminent personalities and .geniuses, develops a specific culture of its own

This particular culture moulds the national and social spirit in a particular form and in special proportions. Philosophy, science, literature, art, religion, and ethics are the sum total of various features, which through centuries of common history, have become common characteristics of a particular group, and are synthesized in a special form, which distinguishes it from other human groups and renders it a .particular identity

Due to this synthesis `the social spirit' is born, which integrates the individuals of a certain group with the whole, in the same way as different parts of the body are organically interrelated and are responsible for its life. The same `spirit' not only gives a nation its independent, specific, and individual existence, but also gives it a `life' that distinguishes it in the course of history from other cultural and spiritual forms of .expression

It is because of this spirit that a particular culture and its social orientation, thought, customs, and behaviour are distinguished from those of other cultures. It is reflected in its approach to nature, life, historical events, feelings, preferences, ideals, beliefs, and even in its scientific, artistic, and technical products and achievements. The impact and imprint of its spirit is manifested in all the material and spiritual .manifestations of a nation's life

It is said that religion is a type of ideology. It is a faith which affirms certain feelings and approaches. But nationality means 'personality,' which brings into existence specific distinguishing characteristics that are common in the spirit of the individuals who share the same social destiny. According to this view, the relationship between .nationality and religion is the relationship between personality and belief

It is said that Islam's opposition to racial discrimination and national prejudice should not be taken to mean that Islam does not accept diversity of nations in human society. The proclamation of equality by Islam does not amount to a negation of plurality of

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nations. On the contrary, it implies that Islam accepts the existence of various nations :as undeniable natural realities. The following verse of the Qur'an

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

O, mankind, indeed we have created you male and female, and have made you" nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the

(sight of Allah, is the most God…fearing among you…" (۴۹:۱۳

Contrary to the argument of those who use it for a denial and negation, actually approves and affirms the diversity of nations. Because, they say, the above mentioned verse, firstly, accepts the division of mankind according to sex (male and female), which is of course the natural division then it immediately goes on to refer to .national and tribal divisions

It shows that grouping of individuals in nations and tribes is also a natural, God…willed phenomenon, like their grouping as men and women. This proves that in the same way as Islam favours a specific relationship between man and woman, and does not intend to eliminate sexuality and its manifestations, so also it favours relations between various nations on an equal level and does not intend to negate nationalities, .which are regarded as a natural phenomenon inherent in the process of creation

Further, the fact that the Qur'an considers ta'druf (to know one another) as the purpose and philosophy of the existence of differences among, nations, suggests that a community identifies itself and

discovers itself in comparison and contrast with other nations, and it realizes its .individuality and vitality vis-à-vis other nations

Hence, they say, contrary to the unduly propagated general belief, Islam affirms nationalism in the sense of cultural heritage, and it is not opposed to cultural .pluralism. What Islam negates is nationalism in the sense of racialism

The theory (which aims at an Islamic justification of nationalism) is inconsistent for several reasons. It is primarily based upon a particular outlook of man and a specific view with regard to the essence and constituents of human culture that is philosophy, .science, art, morals, etc. Both of these views lack soundness

It is presumed with regard to man that his essence is potentially blank. It is supposed to be devoid of any prior intellectual and emotional content or perceptual disposition

to view his world, himself, and his role in it, even on the level of potentiality. It is assumed that human essence is equally neutral towards all modes of thought and emotion, purposes and goals. Man is assumed to be an empty container devoid of .form and colour, totally subservient to that which fills it

He acquires his `egohood,' his personality, his path, and his goal from the content that is poured into the empty vessel of his essence. He assumes any form or personality and adopts any path and goal that is bestowed upon him by the content. His content in fact the first thing that is poured into this vacuum moulds man in any

form, colour, and character his `real' personality and essence being actually identical .with the characteristics bestowed upon him by this content

That is so because his `ego' or `self' is shaped and affirmed by his acquired content. Whatever is offered to him after this, which would suggest a change in his personality, colour, or shape, is only borrowed and alien stuff, because it contradicts with his first personality formed by historical accident. In other words, this theory is inspired by the fourth theory regarding the nature of individual and society. It maintains the idea of .absolute primariness of society, and has been critically examined earlier

From both philosophical and Islamic points of view, such a judgement regarding human nature cannot be justifiable. Man, according to his own special nature…although only potentially has a definite personality, path and goal that is determined by his God…given nature. It is his very nature that determines his real self. Distortion and dehumanization of human existence are measurable only on the basis .of man's essential nature, and not according to criteria based on historical factors

Every system of education and culture which is in harmony with the human nature and is helpful for its development is man's real culture, though it may not be the first culture imposed upon him by historical conditions. Any culture that does not suit human nature is alien to him, and, in a way, distorts and deforms his real nature and converts his `self' into `non…self,' even though it may be

.the product of national history

For instance, the ideas of dualism and the sanctity of fire were distortions imposed on the human nature of ancient Persians, although these notions are considered products of Iranian history. But belief in the unity of God (tawhid) and rejection of all forms of worship of non_Gods signifies man's return to his real nature, even though .this faith is not the product of Iranian soil and history

Also, it has been wrongly presumed regarding human cultural material that it is a colourless and formless stuff to be moulded and shaped by history. It means that, according to this view, philosophy, science, religion, morality, and art, whatever form and colour they may assume, are genuine. But as to what colour, mode, type, or form these should have is relative, and dependent upon history. It is the history and the culture of every nation which necessitate its own special philosophy, its own system .of education, religion, morality and art

In other words, as man himself is considered as being without any specific essence and form, and who draws his identity subsequently from culture, in the same way, the principles and basic materials of human culture are also devoid of any form, colour, and expression. It is history which gives them an identity, a form, and an expression, and stamps them with its particular seal. Some have gone further to the extent of claiming that even "mathematical thinking is influenced by the particular approach of (a culture." (۱

This conception is based

۱- Spengler, the well known sociologist, as quoted by Raymond Aron's Main Currents .in sociological Thought, vol. I, p. ۱۰۷

upon the theory of relativism of human culture. We, in the Principles and Method of

the Philosophy of Realism" have dealt with absolutism and relativism in regard to the principles of thought. There, we have proved that whatever is relative is concerned .with subjective and practical perceptions of reality

It is these perceptions of reality which are different in different cultures, according to the changing conditions of space and time. These perceptions do not provide us with any test of truth or falsehood, and right or wrong, regarding the reality lying beyond them, to which they refer. But the theoretical sciences, scientific thought, and theoretical principles, which provide secure ground for philosophical and theoretical knowledge of man…like the principles of religious world outlook and the primary principles of ethics, are absolute, permanent, and non relative. Here, I am sorry to .say, we shall abstain from further prolongation of this discussion

Secondly, the claim that religion is belief and nationality is personal identity, that the relation between the two is determined by the relation of faith and personality, and that Islam affirms national identities as they are, and officially recognizes them, .amounts to a total negation of the most important mission of religion

The most important mission of religion, and above all that of Islam, lies in offering a world outlook on the basis of a universal system whose central idea is the belief in the unity of God (tawhid) …and in moulding the spiritual and moral personality of man on the

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basis of this world outlook. It seeks to cultivate and develop a new relation between .the individuals and society

Such a project necessitates the foundation of a radically new culture a culture which is human and not national. The culture which Islam offered to the world, and which is known as the Islamic culture today, was not aimed to be a culture similar to those cultivated by other religions by assimilating more or less the elements of the previous .culture of the people

Such religions were influenced by the pre…existing culture, and in their turn influenced the society. The culture that Islam developed was peculiar in the sense that culturalization was inherent in the basic message of this religion. The message of Islam is dissociation of man from cultures unworthy of him and association with a .culture worthy of him

It affirms only that which is essentially positive in an existing culture. A religion which has nothing to do with various types of cultures, and which adjusts with varied cultures, is a religion which feeds itself upon the cultural leftover, and is satisfied with .a casual, once…in…a…week visit to the church

:Thirdly, the meaning of the verse (۴۹:۱۳) that says

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى

Is not that `We have created you as two sexes,' so as to substantiate the claim that mankind is classified in various groups on the basis of sex, and is similarly divided into different nations and nationalities, and, in this way, to justify the conclusion that the verse

means to say that, as the difference of the sexes is natural, an ideology should be based on affirmation of such differences and not their negation, and the differences !of nationality are of the same kind as those of sex

In fact what the verse wants to say is that `We have created you from a male and a female.' This either means that all human beings are genealogically related to and originate from one man and woman (Adam and Eve), or it means that all people are equal since they are the progeny of the same father and mother, and there should not .be any discrimination

which has been used in the verse to refer to the purpose , لِتَعَارَفُوا Fourthly, the phrase of creation, doesn't mean that nations are diversified so that `they may be distinguished from one another,' so as to justify the conclusion that all the nations

should retain their specific character permanently in order to be identifiable as compared with other nations.

If the Qur’anic verse aimed at emphasizing this point, it should have used the word لِيَتَعَارَفُوا (that they may know their identity) instead of the word لِتَعَارَفُوا (that you may know one another). As those who are addressed are the individuals, the Qur’an tells them that `the divisions that have taken place in such a manner are inherent in the process of creation, so that you individuals may know each other by means of the national and tribal associations.' We know that the purpose of

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this I verse is not to preach that different nations and communities should necessarily retain their individualities, remaining independent of one another forever.

Fifthly, whatever we have described in the last chapter concerning the Islamic point of view regarding homogeneity and heterogeneity of societies is sufficient to prove that, according to Islam, the natural and creative process itself leads different societies towards the establishment of a unified society and culture, and the main programme of Islam is to establish such a culture and such a society. It is also sufficient to reject the above mentioned view.

The concept of Mahdism (the belief in the coming of the promised Mahdi) in Islam is based upon such a view of the future of Islam, mankind, and the world. Here, we conclude our discussion on society to initiate the discussion about history.

What is History?

point

History may be defined in three ways. In fact, there are three closely connected disciplines related to history.

۱. Knowledge of the incidents, events, circumstances, and conditions of people living in the past in relation to the present conditions and circumstances. All situations, conditions, events, and episodes which take place belong to the present, that is, the

time during which they take shape, are judged, reported, and recorded as matters of the day by daily newspapers. However, as soon as their time elapses, they are .merged with the past and become a part of history

Hence, history, in this sense, is the knowledge of the bygone incidents, events, conditions and circumstances of the people

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in the past. Biographies, records of battles and conquests, and all such chronicles .compiled in the past, or at the present, by all nations, come under this category

History in this sense is, firstly, the knowledge of the particular; that is, it is the knowledge of a sequence of personal and individual episodes, not the knowledge of a series of general laws and relationships. Secondly, it is a study of narratives and traditions, not a rational discipline. Thirdly, it is the knowledge of `being,' not that of `becoming.' Fourthly, it is related to the past, not to the present. This type of history .(we shall term as `traditional history' (tarikh naqli

History is the knowledge of laws that appear to govern the life of the past, obtained .۲ .through investigation and analysis of the past events

The stuff with which the traditional history is concerned, i.e. the events and incidents of the past, provides the rudimentary and basic material for this study. For the study of history in this sense, such events and incidents are similar to the material gathered by a natural scientist for his laboratory analysis and investigation to discover certain general laws, through induction, regarding the nature and properties of his material .and the causal relations governing its changes

The historian, in this analytical endeavor, wishes to uncover the true nature of historical events and their causal relationship, and to discover the general and universal laws applicable to all similar events of the past and the present. We shall call

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.'history in this sense ` scientific history

Although the object of research and the subject matter of scientific history are the events and episodes of the past, the laws which it deduces are not specifically confined to the past. They have the ability of being generalized in order to be applied to the present and the future also. This aspect of history makes it very useful, making it one of the sources of man's knowledge regarding himself, and enables him to .exercise control over his own future

The difference between the task of a researcher in the field of scientific history and a researcher in the natural sciences is notable. The material of research for the natural .scientist is a chain of real and verifiable occurrences that are present

Hence, necessarily, all his investigations, analyses, and results are empirical and verifiable. But the material on which a historian works belongs to the past and does not exist in the present. What is accessible to a historian now is only a bundle of .chronicles about the past

A historian is like a judge in a court of law who decides on the basis of circumstantial evidence and indications on record in his files, not on the basis of the testimony of any eye…witness. In this way, the analysis of a historian is logical, rational, and mental, not one based upon verifiable external evidence. A historian makes his analysis in the laboratory of his mind and intellect, with the instruments of logic and inference, not

in the external physical laboratory with instruments of observation and .measurement

Hence, the job of a historian is more akin to that of a philosopher than of a scientist. Scientific history, like traditional history, is concerned with the past, not with the present. It is the knowledge of ` being' not of ` becoming.' But unlike traditional history .it is general, not particular; it is rational, not based upon tradition

Scientific history is actually a branch of sociology; i.e. it is a sociological study of the

societies of the past. The subject of sociology includes the study of the past and the present societies. However, if we restrict sociology to the study of contemporary societies, then scientific history and sociology should be considered as two disciplines, .separate but closely related, complementary, and dependent upon each other

Philosophy of history is based upon the knowledge of gradual changes and . ۳ transformations which lead societies from one stage to another. It deals with the laws governing these transformations and changes. In other words, it is the science of .` becoming' of societies, not of their ` being' only

Perhaps this question might have arisen in the mind of the honoured reader, whether it is possible for societies to have simultaneously ` being' as well as ` becoming,' and that being should be the subject of one discipline, viz. scientific history, and ` becoming' of societies the subject of another discipline, viz. philosophy of history. Isn't any synthesis between the two impossible, as ` being' implies rest and ` becoming' movement? Only one of the

two should be chosen. Our picture of the societies of the past should be either a .'picture of ` being' or a picture of ` becoming

Probably the honourable reader may pose this problem in more general and comprehensive terms: Our picture of the universe as a whole…and of society as a part of it…is either a static or a dynamic one. If the universe or society is static then it has ` being,' not becoming; and if it is changing and dynamic, it has ` becoming' and not '.` being

From this point of view, the most significant division of the schools of philosophy is made. It has been said that philosophical systems are divided into two main groups: the philosophies of ` being' and the philosophies of ` becoming.' The philosophies of ` being' are those which hold that being and non…being are incompatible with each other, and they. regard contradictions as impossible. It is supposed that if there is '.` being' there cannot be ` non…being' and if there is ` non…being' there is no ` being

Hence one has to choose one of these two alternatives. As being is necessary and there is nothing except being in the world and society, the world is governed by rest and stillness. But the philosophies of becoming, on the other hand, hold that being and non…being co…exist in each and every single moment, and this is what we call motion. '.Motion is nothing except that a thing `is' and at the same time it `is not

Hence, the philosophy of being and the

philosophy of becoming are two opposite views regarding existence, and one has to choose any one of the two. If we associate ourselves with the first view, we should hold that societies have `being' not `becoming,' and, contrarily, if we associate ourselves with the second view, it should be assumed that societies have `becoming' and not `being.' Either we can have scientific history, in the light of the above discussion, without having any philosophy of history, or we can have philosophy of .history without a scientific history

The answer to these questions lies in the fact that such thinking about being and nothingness, about motion and rest, and about incompatibility of opposites, is a characteristic feature of the Western though and originates in the West's ignorance of the philosophical problems o: being (problems concerning existence) and specially the profound problem of principality of existence (asalat al…wujud) and a number o: .other problems related to it

Firstly, take the statements that `being' is synonymous with rest, or, in other words, rest is being, and that motion is a synthesis between being and non…being and means unity of two opposites. These notions are some of the gross errors made by some .schools of Western philosophy

Secondly, what is maintained here has nothing to do with the above…mentioned philosophical problem? The positions taken here are based upon the hypothesis that society, like all other living beings, follows two different sets of laws: one set of laws which is confined to a particular species, and the

other set of laws which deals with changes of species and their transformation into one another. We shall term the first kind of laws, `the laws of being', and the other, '.`the laws of becoming

Incidentally, this point has been realized by some sociologists. Auguste Comte is one :of them. Raymond Aron says about him

Statics and dynamics are two basic categories of Auguste Comte's sociology... Statics consists essentially in examining, in analyzing what Comte calls the social consensus .(social unanimity). A society is comparable to a living organism

It is impossible to study the functioning of an organ without placing it in the context of living creature. By the same token it is impossible to study politics of the state without placing them in the context of the society at a given moment ....As for dynamics at the outset it consists merely of the description of the successive stages through which (human societies pass. (۱

If we take into consideration any species from among the species of living beings, like mammals, reptiles, birds etc., we shall see that they have a group of particular laws specific to their kind, which govern them as long as they are related to that particular species. (For example, the laws related to. an animal's embryonic stages, its health and survival, its conditions of sickness and disease, its food habits and nourishment, reproduction and growth, or the laws related to the patterns of its habitation or (.migration, and its mating habits

But according to the theory of

.Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, vol. I. pp. ۸۵,۸۶ -۱

evolution and development of species, in addition to certain specific laws that operate within the species, there is another set of laws which are concerned with the process

of evolution and transformation of .the lower species into the higher ones. These laws are formulated philosophically, and sometimes termed as the `philosophy of .evolution' as distinct from the science of biology

As society is considered to be a living organism, it is also governed by two types of laws: biological laws and evolutionary laws. The laws which are concerned with the causes of birth and decline of civilizations, and the conditions which determine social existence, are laws which are universally applicable to all the varying forms and .changes taking place in various societies

We shall call them the `laws of being' of societies. And those laws which are concerned with the causes of evolution of societies from one epoch to another and from one system to another system, would be termed as the `laws of becoming' of societies. The difference between them will become clearer when we discuss each of .the two types of problems

Hence history, according to its third meaning, is the study of evolution of societies from one stage to another. It is not merely the knowledge of the existence of the society at a particular stage or at all stages. For the sake of avoiding any possibility of confusion, these problems should not be mixed with the problems of scientific history. We shall call the study of these

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'.problems the `philosophy of history

Very often the problems related with scientific history, which deals with the non…evolutionary movement of society, are not clearly differentiated from the problems of philosophy of history, which deals with the evolutionary movement of .society. This is what gives rise to misunderstandings and errors

Philosophy of history, like scientific history deals with the general not with the particular. It is rational (`aqli), not traditional (naqli). It is the knowledge of becoming of societies, not of their being. And also, contrary to the case of scientific history, the

use of the word `history' ir. the term `philosophy of history' should not lead us to think that philosophy of history is related to the past; rather it means that philosophy of history is the study of a continuous stream which originated in the past and continues to flow towards the future. Time, for the sake of study of these types of problems, cannot be assumed to be merely a container [occupied by historical reality], but it is to .be regarded as one of the dimensions of this reality

The study of history is useful in all of its three senses. Even the descriptive traditional history, which deals with the lives and characters of individuals, may be useful, moving, directive, educative and constructive. But it depends upon who the individuals whose life histories are discussed are, and what conclusions we infer from their lives. Men are made, according to the law of imitation, under the influence of the behaviour, ,treatment

.resolutions, moral habits, and companionship of their fellowmen

As the lives of contemporaries serve as a lesson and example for man, and he learns manners and customs from his fellow beings…or, according to Luqman, learns good manners even from the ill…mannered, so that he does not commit their mistakes…the same principle is applicable to the biographies of the men belonging to the past. .History, like a film, transforms the past into the present

The Quran itself refers to the beneficial aspects of the lives of such worthy people :whom it considers as fit and imitable models. About the Prophet (S), the Quran says

لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Verily, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example for whosoever hopes for“ (God and the Last Day, and remembers God much.” (۳۳:۲۱

:About Abraham (A), the Quran says

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ...

(You have a good example in Abraham and those with him ....” (۶۰:۴“

Whenever the Quran refers to the characters of persons as examples for others, it does not give importance to their worldly positions, but always emphasizes the moral .and humanistic aspects of their personalities

It is from this viewpoint that the Quran remembers Luqman, a Negro slave, as a wise man, although he was neither a king, nor a wealthy man, nor a famous philosopher. He is introduced to the world as a paragon of wisdom. The examples cited in the Quran of the true believers…one belonging

to the Pharaoh's tribe and another mentioned in Surat Yasin…also belong to the same .category

In this book, where we intend to discuss sociology and history from the Islamic point of view, we will confine our attention solely to scientific history and philosophy of history because of their relevance to the world outlook of Islam. Accordingly, we will discuss these two topics somewhat elaborately, starting with the nature of scientific .history

Scientific History

point

To begin with, I would like to remind that scientific history is to in the light of the view discussed earlier that the society has a reality, and personality independent of the individual. If society does… not have a reality independent of its members, there may not be any laws except those governing individuals,' and, consequently, scientific history, which is the science of the laws and principles that govern societies, would be .pointless

That history is governed by laws is a necessary corollary of the proposition that history has its own nature, which again follows from the proposition that society has

its own nature and reality. In the context of scientific history, the following problems .should be studied

As has been pointed out earlier, scientific history is based on traditional history. . ١ Traditional history provides the material for the laboratory of scientific history. Hence, firstly, it should be thoroughly investigated whether the contents of traditional history are authentic and reliable. If the material is not reliable, all research and scientific inference regarding the laws governing the societies of the past would be

.futile and pointless

If we proceed with the supposition that traditional history is reliable, and that . ٢ society has an essence and personality independent of individuals, then deduction of general laws from historical events and episodes would depend upon the hypothesis that the law of causation, or causal determinism, governs the sphere of human activities…that is the sphere of problems associated with human freedom and will, .which are expressed in historical events

Without accepting it; the laws of history can neither be generalized nor universalized, nor can there be any orderly system of such laws. The question is whether the law of causation governs the course of history, and if it does, what are we to think of human ?freedom and responsibility

Is history materialistic in nature and governed by materialistic forces? Is the . ٣ principal force dominating human history a material force? Are intellectual and spiritual forces secondary, subordinate, and dependent upon the material forces that shape history? Contrarily, is it true that history is essentially spiritual, and the dominating force of history a spiritual force, the material forces being secondary, ?subsidiary, and subservient to it

In other words, is history in itself `idealistic'? Or do we have a third alternative, i.e. history possesses essentially a composite character, governed by two or more

forces? Is it true that a number of material and spiritual forces…more or less ?harmonious and occasionally conflicting, depending on a system…govern history

Authenticity and Inauthenticity of Traditional History .۱

There are some who severely criticize traditional history, considering it as a series of fabrications of

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the narrators based on the historian's personal interests and objectives, his social affiliations, or on national, communal or religious prejudices…all of which have more or .less led to fabrications or distortions

The historians have compiled history according to their own wishes, and even those who, from a moral point of view, refrained from deliberate fabrication and distortion .of facts, were selective in their choice while recording incidents

That is, they have invariably related only those incidents which did not go against their objectives and beliefs. They avoided giving accounts of such events which happened .to be against their beliefs and feelings

In this way, though they might not have added anything of their own, or recorded any fabricated material, yet through their choice they gave history their desired form. A significant event or an important personality can be studied and analysed only when .all the relevant material is accessible to the researcher

If only a fraction of the required material essential for the study is available and the .rest is not, the true face of reality is hidden and, replaced by a radically different face

The pessimism of these critics of traditional history is similar to the attitude of some skeptics among Islamic jurisprudents (fuqaha' or mujtahidun) about Islamic tradition (hadith) and narrations (riwayat)an attitude which has been termed "insidad bab .("al…` ilm" ("closure of the door of knowledge

Some have made such ironic statements about history as, "History means, a series of

events that never occurred, recorded by a person who was

not at all present at the time." A journalist is quoted to have said that "realities are sacred, but one has freedom of faith [to believe or disbelieve them]." Some are not so .pessimistic, but they, too, prefer to be skeptical regarding history

In the book What is History?, the following statement has been quoted from Sir :George Clark

Knowledge of the past that has come down through one or more human minds, and ... has been processed by them, and therefore cannot consist of elemental and impersonal atoms which nothing can alter ....The exploration seems to be endless, and some impatient scholars take refuge in skepticism, or at least in the doctrine that, since all historical judgments involve persons and points of view, one is as good as (another and there is no `objective' historical truth. (۱

The fact is that though we may not entirely trust even the records of the most reliable historians, but there are, firstly, a series of definite indubitable in history, similar to the self...evident postulates accepted in other disciplines. These can form the subject of .the historian's study, analysis, and research

Secondly, the researcher can exercise his discretion in reaching a conclusion regarding the truth or falsehood of some narrations by subjecting them to critical scrutiny. Today we see that researchers have conclusively proved the unreliability of certain matters which were exaggerated out of proportion and were held in reverence for several centuries. The story of burning of the library at Alexandria, which began to

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.E. H. Carr, What is History?, p. ۸ -۱

be circulated since the seventh century of Hijrah, gradually found its way into several

.books of history

But the findings of the last century researchers have proved it absolutely baseless, only a fabrication of some prejudiced Christians. In the same fashion, sometimes certain truths are obscured and hidden, but after sometime they are somehow uncovered. Therefore, it is not justifiable to be totally skeptical of the historical .records

Causation in History .۲

Does absolute causation govern history? If the law of causality dominates history, it would be essential to accept that occurrence of every incident in itself should be certain and inevitable, and that some type of determinism prevails over history. If determinism governs history, then, where is the place for the individual's freedom and ?choice

If in reality occurrence of events is deterministic, then no one has any responsibility, and no one may deserve any praise or reproach for his deeds. If the law of causation does not govern history, there can be no universality, and if there is no possibility of generalization or universalization, history cannot have any law because law is dependent upon universality, and universality is a corollary of the principle of .causality

This is the main difficulty with regard to scientific history and philosophy of history. There are some who, on the basis of the principle of causation and the principle of universality, negate freedom and choice. They maintain that whatever is accepted in the name of freedom is not actually freedom. Contrarily, there are others who approve the principle of

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freedom and negate the view that history follows certain laws. Many sociologists accept the incompatibility of causality and freedom, and, therefore, they accept .causality and negate freedom

Hegel, and Marx following him, accept historical determinism. According to Hegel and Marx, freedom is nothing but consciousness of historical necessity. In the book Marx and Marxism, the following passage of Engels is quoted from his work Anti-Duhring:

Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him freedom is the appreciation of necessity. Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood. Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. This holds good in relation both to the laws of external nature and those which govern the bodily and mental existence of men themselves.(١)

And also in the same book, after a brief discussion of the view that man can and should act according to his particular historical conditions and in the direction determined by those conditions, Engels says:

Identifying and understanding these given conditions render human action more effective. Every act in the opposite direction amounts to resisting and obstructing the historic course. To act in the direction determined by the historic course means moving within the course of history and participating in the process.

But the question, as to what is meant by freedom, still remains to be answered. The

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١- Andre Peter, Marx and Marxism, Persian translation by Shuja` al-Din Diya'iyan, p. ٢۴٩, Appendix V.

Marxist school answers that freedom of the individual lies in his appreciation of the historical necessity, and the social movement towards which the whole course of history is directed.(١)

It is evident that these remarks do not solve the difficulty. The real problem regarding man's relationship with historical conditions is as follows: Does man control historical

conditions? Can he give history his preferred direction? Is he able to change the ?course of history

If man is unable to direct the course of history, or change it, he is forced to follow the course of history. This is the only way through which he can not only survive but also continue to evolve. If he goes in a direction opposite to that of the historic course, he .will definitely perish

Now the question arises whether man is free or determined to participate in the course of history. If we accept the principle of priority of society over the individual and that the consciousness and awareness of the individual and his feelings are moulded by historical and social conditions…especially economic conditions…does ?there remain any room for individual freedom

Moreover, what is meant by the statement that `freedom is the consciousness of necessity'? Does it mean that an individual whose life is threatened by a storm and who has the full consciousness of the fact that after some time the tide would take him down into the depths of the sea, or an individual falling from a high cliff who is conscious that according

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.Ibid., pp. ۳۷,۳۸ -۱

to the law of gravity his bones would be crushed into pieces within a short time, is ?`free' to drown into the sea or fall into the valley

According to the materialistic theory of historical determinism, social conditions act as restraining factors for man, which determine his direction and mould his personality, his consciousness, his determination and choice. Man is nothing but an empty pot, merely a raw material in the hands of social conditions. Man is the product of the conditions, which are not created by him. Preceding conditions determine the future course for man. It is not man who determines the future course of historical .conditions. On the basis of these notions, freedom has no sense and meaning

In reality, human freedom cannot be conceived apart from the theory of (specific human) nature. According to this theory, in the general course of the essential movement of the universe, man enters into the world with a certain dimension that is over and above the physical universe, and this extra dimension is the essence and .core of human existence

Afterwards, under the influence of the environmental factors, man's personality develops and matures. It is this existential dimension that gives man a unique human personality, so that he may rule over the tide of history and determine its course. I have already discussed this problem under the heading "Determinism or Freedom," and I shall discuss this issue further under the title, "The Role of Personality in History," when discussing the historical role

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.of heroic figures of history

Human freedom, in the sense pointed out, is neither inconsistent with the law of causation, nor is it incompatible with the universality of the laws of history. That man, in spite of his freedom of choice, his will and his thought, should have to adopt a predetermined, specific, and an inviolable course in social life…a freedom loaded with .necessity…does not imply anything but the rule of blind necessity over man and his will

The problem regarding history being subject to laws and their universality poses another difficulty. It is revealed through the study of historical events and incidents that sometimes a sequence of trivial accidents changes the course of history. Of course, the accidents contrary to the belief of some people…do not occur without any cause; such events are called `accidents' because they cannot be explained by a .general and universal system of causal laws

If accidents do not follow any universal law and have played an effective role in the movement of history, then history would be regarded as devoid of any kind of specific laws. Among the accidents which have been effective in determining the course of history, the nose of Cleopatra, the well…known queen of Egypt, has become

proverbial. Many times there have been in history where, according to the well…known saying, "A waft has ruffled the pages of history."

In his book: What is History? Edward Hallett Carr writes:

The other source of the attack is the famous crux of Cleopatra's nose. This is the

theory that history is, by and large, a chapter of accidents, a series of events determined by chance coincidences, and attributable only to the most casual causes.

The result of the Battle of Actum was due not to the sort of causes commonly postulated by historians, but to Antony's infatuation with Cleopatra. When Bajazet was deterred by an attack of gout from marching into central Europe, Gibbon observed that "an acrimonious honour falling on. a single fibre of a man may prevent or suspend the misery of nations."

When King Alexander of Greece died in the autumn of ١٩٢٠ from the bite of a pet monkey, this accident touched off a train of events which led Sir Winston Churchill to remark that "a quarter of a million persons died of this monkey's bite." Or take again Trotsky's comment on the fever contracted while shooting ducks which put him out of action at a critical point of his quarrel with Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin in the autumn of ١٩٢٣: "One can foresee a revolution or a war, but it is impossible to foresee the consequences of an autumn shooting …trip for wild ducks." (١)

In the Islamic world the instance of the defeat of Marwan ibn Muhammad, the last Umayyad caliph, is an evidence of the role of accident deciding the fate of history. During his last battle with the `Abbasids, Marwan, feeling the necessity to answer the call of nature, went aside to ease himself.

Accidentally, a person from the enemy's camp

.E.H. Carr, op. cit. pp. ۱۴۴, ۱۴۵ -۱

happened to pass by, he saw and killed him immediately. The news of his death spread among the soldiers of his army. As such an accident was never anticipated, his soldiers became panicky and fled from the battlefield. The Umayyad dynasty was :thus overthrown. It was on this occasion that it was said

ذَهَبَتِ الدَّوْلَه بِبوْلَه

.(".a dynasty was swept away by urine")

Carr, after explaining that every accident, far from being without cause, is governed :by a chain of causes and effects, which terminates another causal chain, says

How can one discover in history a coherent sequence of cause and effect, how can... we find any meaning in history, when our sequence is liable to be broken or deflected (at any moment by some other, and from our point of view, irrelevant sequence? (۱)

The solution to this difficulty is dependent upon the question whether society and history have a particular direction. If history in itself has direction, the role of accidents would be insignificant, which means although certain accidents may change the position of some pawns on the chess...board of history, they do not exercise any .significant influence on the course of history as a whole

At the most, they can accelerate or arrest it for a moment. But if history is devoid of nature and personality and does not follow a path determined by its own nature, it would be without any particular direction, and also it would be impossible to formulate .any universal laws and to forecast the future

In my

.Ibid., p. ۱۴۶ -۱

view, history has a specific nature and personality which is a composite product of the

individual human beings who make it, and who have a natural urge for perfection. I believe that the role of accidental events does not affect historical necessity and .universality of history

Montesquieu has beautifully explained the role of accidents in history, a part of which :I have quoted earlier. He says

if the outcome of a single battle, i.e. a particular cause, was the ruin of a state, there... was a general cause which decreed that, that state was destined to perish through a (single battle. (١

:He further says

It was not the affair of Poltava that ruined Charles. Had he not been destroyed at that place, he would have been in another. The casualties of the fortune are easily repaired; but who can be guarded against events that incessantly arise from the (nature of things? (٢

?Is History Materialistic in Nature

point

What is the nature of history? Is the real nature of history cultural, political, economic, religious, or moral? Is history materialistic or non-materialistic, or a combination of both? This is one of the main questions related with history. Unless this question is not .answered, our understanding of history would not be correct and sound

It is evident that all the above...mentioned intellectual and material factors have participated in the fabric of history. But the question arises, which of them is the determining factor that plays the most important role and is prior to all others. There has been controversy as to

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.Raymond Aron, op. cit., p. ٢٧ -١

.Ibid -٢

which of the factors represents the real spirit of history and its essence, and which of the factors is able to subordinate and explain the subsidiary role of other factors. ?Which of them is the base, to which others serve as superstructure

Usually, history is compared to a machine with many motors, in which every motor is independent of the others. In fact, history is considered to have a complex not a simple nature. But if we regard it as having many motors, then what are we to think of ?its evolution and its course of development

It is not possible that many motors, each of them having a specific momentum pushing history in its own direction, could carry history on a specific course of evolution, unless we consider the above…mentioned factors as the moving forces .subordinate to a super…force, the spirit of history

This spirit, by employing various historical forces,. drives it towards a predetermined evolutionary goal. It is this spirit which actually represents the essence of history. But this interpretation is different from the doctrine of monistic view of history. The nature of history is synonymous with the spirit of history, and it cannot be derived .from, what are called, the moving forces of history

In our age, a theory which has attracted many supporters is that of `historical materialism' or the `dialectical materialistic theory of history.' Historical materialism, which is an economic interpretation of history and an economic…historical view of man…not a humanistic interpretation of economy or history…explains every

.human activity from the economic point of view

In other words, according to historical materialism, history is materialistic in nature and essence and follows a dialectical process. This means that the basis of all historical movements, revolutions, and historical manifestations of every society, is its .economic structure

They are the material forces of production of society and its relations of production

which fashion history and give direction to all intellectual manifestations of a society like morality, science, philosophy, religion, law, and culture. These manifestations .change with changes in the mode of production and relations of production

The expression that history is dialectical in nature means that the evolutionary movements of history are dialectical movements caused by a series of dialectical contradictions, which are concomitant with those contradictions. Dialectical contradictions are different from nondialectical ones in the sense that every phenomenon is compelled to give rise to its own negation from within. As a result of a series of changes caused by this inner contradiction, the phenomenon undergoes a radical qualitative change at a higher level, wherein the two lower stages attain .perfection through synthesis

Thus historical materialism is comprised of two basic stands: firstly, that the nature of history is materialistic; secondly, its movements are dialectical movements. Here we shall study the first problem. The second shall be taken up while dealing with the .evolution and development of history

The theory of materialistic nature of history is based on a series of certain philosophical, psychological, and sociological principles that logically lead to other

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theories of ideological significance. I would like to throw some light on this subject, especially because some Muslim writers claim that although Islam does not approve .of the philosophical materialism, it accepts historical materialism

Consequently they have based their own historical and sociological views on this theory. It is, therefore, essential to discuss this problem in some detail, first expounding the foundations and principles on which this theory is based and then the conclusions which are derived from them. After this exposition we shall evaluate the .basis of this theory from the Islamic and scientific points of view

Basic Principles of Historical Materialism

Priority of matter over spirit .۱

Man has body as well as spirit. Human body and its functionings are the subject of biological, physical, and physiological studies. But the spirit and processes related with the soul are the subject of philosophical and psychological studies. Thoughts, beliefs, .feelings, desires, concepts, and ideologies represent spiritual processes

The principle of priority of matter over spirit implies that spiritual processes are not independent, but they are only a sequence of reflections of material processes; i.e., .they are caused by the influence of the conscious matter on the nerves and the brain

These processes are significant only to the extent that they form a connecting link between the internal physical forces and the external world, but they can never dominate human existence in the manner in which its opposite forces, i.e. the material .forces, do

For example, the psychical processes may be compared to the headlights of an automobile. An automobile cannot move about without

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its headlights in the dark hours of night. It finds its way in the light of its headlamp. But .what drives it is not the headlamp but its engine

If these psychical processes, such as thoughts, beliefs, theories and ideologies, participate in the drama of material forces of history, they assist the movement of history, but they in themselves are unable to generate any movement. They can .never be compared to the material forces

Psychical processes are not independent; they depend for their existence on matter. The real forces are those which signify human existence and are identified with .material forces, and which are measurable in material terms

In this way, the psychical processes are not capable of generating movement and directing the course of history, and cannot be considered as a `lever' for the

movement of society. The spiritual values have absolutely no chance to become the motivating force, the source, and the goal of a social movement, unless they serve to .support and explain the material values of history and society

Accordingly, one has to be very careful in interpreting history. This theory emphasizes that we should be cautious not to be deceived by the appearances. Occasionally, at some point in history, it may appear that a thought, belief, or a faith has brought .about change in a society, and stimulated it at a particular stage of development

But if we analyse history correctly, we shall see that such beliefs do not have an independent existence; they are only the mirror…image

or reflection of material forces of society. There were actually material forces, which .in the guise of those beliefs, moved and changed the society

Material forces are the progressive, leading force of history. They are represented, technically, by the society's system of production, and, from the humanistic point of .view, by the deprived and exploited class of society

Feuerbach, the famous materialist philosopher, from whom Marx himself has :borrowed many of his ideas, raises the following questions

?What is theory? What is praxis? What is the difference between the two

:He himself answers that

Everything which is confined to the mind is theoretical. Whatever moves the minds of many is practical necessity. It is action which unites many minds together and (organizes the masses, and in this manner finds a place for itself in the world. (۱

:And Marx, his faithful pupil, writes

It is obvious that the weapon of criticism cannot replace criticism of weapons. Only .the material forces can defeat other material forces

Marx does not believe in the independence of non…material forces. He, at the most, recognizes their value in relation to material existence: He says: “Theory also, only by taking roots into the lives of the masses, can be transformed into a material force.” (۲)

Priority of matter over spirit, priority of the body over the mind, inessentiality of spiritual forces; and rejection of intellectual and spiritual values as fundamental, are among the basic principles of the philosophy of materialism.

Quite contrary to this philosophy is the other philosophy which is based on the essentiality

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۱- Andre Peter , op. cit., p. ۳۹.

۲- Ibid.

of spirit, according to which all the fundamental dimensions of human existence cannot be interpreted by means of matter or its modes. In the domain of human existence, spirit is a fundamental reality, and the spiritual energies are independent of the material energies.

In this way, the spiritual forces, i.e. the intellectual forces, faith, belief and emotions, are regarded as independent factors for some movements at the individual level and at the level of society. They serve as `levers' which can be used for the movement of history. Many of historical movements have ultimately arisen because of these `levers,' especially those which belong to a higher human plane. The higher individual and collective movements are independently originated by these forces, and derive their sublimity from these very forces.

Psychic forces sometimes strongly influence physical and material powers, not only at the level of voluntary activity, but also at the level of mechanical, involuntary, and physiological activity, and employ them for attaining their own specific purpose. The effects of psychical suggestions for curing physical ailments and the miraculous effects of hypnotism, which belong to the same category, cannot be overlooked.

Knowledge and faith, particularly faith, and specifically whenever these two psychic forces are harmonized, a great and useful force is generated which can create wonders by playing an extraordinarily progressive and revolutionary role in transforming the course of history.

Independence of mind and spiritual powers is one of the fundamental principles of "epistemological realism."(۱)

۲. Primacy and priority of material needs over intellectual needs

Man has at least two types of needs for his social

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۱- Allamah Tabataba'i, Murtada Mutahhari, Usul-e falsafeh wa rawish-e riyalism," "Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism," vol. I and II. (Translator's note: The term "realism" is used by the author in the specific sense of epistemological realism not metaphorical realism.)

existence. Firstly, there are the material needs, such as the need for bread, water, shelter, dress, medicine, and other such needs. Secondly, there are the intellectual needs, such as the needs for education, knowledge, literature, art, philosophical speculation, faith, ideology, prayer, morality, and other such things. These two types of needs accompany man in all situations and conditions. But which of them precedes the other? material needs or intellectual needs? Or none of them?

The theory of priority of material needs is based on the notion that material needs are more important and preferable. Their importance is not because of the fact that at the initial stage man is in pursuit of material needs, and when these needs are satisfied, he can divert his attention and energies towards the attainment of intellectual pursuits, but because material needs are also the basis and the source of intellectual needs.

It is not that man is created with two types of needs and two types of instincts: material needs and material instincts, intellectual needs and intellectual instincts;

rather man has been created with only one type of needs and one type of instincts. Intellectual needs are only secondary needs, which serve the sole purpose of .gratifying the material needs in a better manner

This is the reason why the intellectual needs, from the point of view of form, quality, and also essence, are subordinated to the material needs. In every age, man has ,given a specific form, character, and mode to his material needs

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according to the stage of development of the means of production. His intellectual requirements, which originate in his material requirements, correspond in form, .mode, and quality to his material necessities

Hence, there is a twofold relationship of priority between the material needs and the intellectual needs: priority of existence, i.e. intellectual needs are the by‑products of the material needs; and the priority of essence, i.e. the form, quality, and nature of the intellectual needs remain subordinated to that of the material needs. In his book Historical Materialism P. Royan quotes from page ٩٢ of Hymen Louis' book :Philosophical Ideas

Man's material course of existence led him to propound theories corresponding to the material needs of the time about his world, society, art, and morality; all intellectual manifestations are the resultant products of material conditions and the mode of (production. (١

Accordingly, scientific judgment, philosophical thought, artistic and aesthetic sensibility, moral values, and religious propensities of every human being are subject ,to his way of .life. Applying this maxim

Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you think," which refers to individuals, to " the society, it may be said: "Tell me what is the degree of development of the means of production, and what are the economic relations among the members of a society, and I will tell you what ideology, which philosophy and what ethics and religion the

members of that society follow."

Radically opposed to this theory is the theory of independence of intellectual needs. According to it, although

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1- P. Royan, Historical Materialism, p. ٣٧.

in the individual human being the material needs sprout up early in life…as soon as a child is born he gropes for his mother's breast…..the intellectual needs which are hidden inside the human nature, blossom gradually.

During the later stages of his development and maturity, man sacrifices his material needs for the sake of intellectual needs. Or, in other words, the urge of intellectual enjoyment is stronger and more indigenous to human nature than the physical enjoyments and attractions.(1)

The greater an individual's education and training, the more he considers his material needs, material enjoyments, and material existence as subordinate to his intellectual needs, intellectual enjoyments…and intellectual existence. Society also follows the same principle.

In primitive societies material needs are more dominant than intellectual needs; but as society advances and becomes more refined, intellectual needs assume more important position and become the goal of human life, while material needs, becoming secondary, are demoted to a lower place as mere means to attain higher ends. (2)

3. Priority of action over thought

Man is a being who thinks, understands, and acts. Is action prior to thought or vice versa? Is the essence of man action or thought? Does human nobility depend upon action, or does it depend upon thought? Is man the product of action or thought?

Historical materialism is based on the idea of independence of action and its priority over thought. It considers action as the base, and thought as its offshoot. Ancient logic .and philosophy considered thought as the key to action

,According to that logic

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.Ibn Sina, in part ۸ of his al-'Isharat, has discussed this subject with great insight -۱

Murtada Mutahhari, Qiyam wa inqilab-a Mahdi, "The Uprising and Revolution of -۲ ".al-Mahdi

thought is divided into concepts and judgments, each of which may be further divided into a priori (self-evident) and theoretic. A priori ideas are acknowledged as the key to theoretical ideas. In that logic and philosophy, the essence of man (the self) is regarded as pure thought. Human perfection and nobility is seen as lying in wisdom. (The `perfect man' is synonymous with the `man of wisdom." (۱)

But historical materialism is established on the principle that action is the key to thought and the criterion of thought. The essence of man is his productive activity. Action is the source of man's identity and it moulds him also. Marx says, "The entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the begetting of man through human (labour. (۲)

And Engels says, "Man himself is the creation of action." (۳)From the very beginning, man, instead of contemplating over natural calamities, conquered the external environment by means of his hard labour, and in the same way (through revolutionary action) he overpowered the powerful aggressors to establish a society according to :his own desires. In the book Marx and Marxism, the author says

Whereas in the philosophy of being (a philosophy that interprets the world in terms of "being" as opposed to the philosophy of "becoming," which interprets the world in terms of motion. Marxism belongs to the group of the philosophies of "becoming") it was customary at first to set forth the ideas and the principles from which practical

,(conclusions are derived; praxis (practical philosophy

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صَيْرورَةُ The following definition of the purpose and end of philosophy has been given -١
The purpose of philosophy) is to transform man into a) .الإنْسانِ عالماً عَقْلِيّاً مُضاهياً لِلْعالمِ العَيْنِيّ
.rational microcosm analogous to the external macrocosm
.Andre Peter, op. cit. pp. ٤٠,٤١ -٢
.Ibid -٣

on the other hand, regards action as the origin and basis of all thought. It replaces the .faith in thought by the philosophy of power

In agreement with Hegel, it asserts: “The real being of man, in the first instance, is his own action.” In this belief he joins the German thinker who reversed the famous phrase, “In the beginning there was the Word”…in which the Word signifies spirit, for it is through the word that the spirit expresses itself…and declared “In the beginning (there was the Act.”(١)

This is one of the principles of the materialistic philosophy of Marxism. This principle is known as “praxis” in the Marxist terminology, and is borrowed by Marx from his .materialist predecessor, Feuerbach, and his another master, Hegel

Opposed to this principle is the principle of the philosophy of ontological realism [idealism] that believes in the priority of thought over action and reciprocal interaction of thought and action. In this philosophy, thought is the essence of man (e.g. the self's .(` knowledge by presence' of itself

Man has a reciprocal relation with action and work: he creates work and his work in turn moulds him. Man, through his action upon the external world, acquires the data of his knowledge from the external world; until the mind becomes enriched with these .primary data, it remains incapable of any intelligent activity

After collecting this data, the mind reciprocally exercises its powers on the data in

various fashions, as by generalization, abstraction, and inference (ratiocination). In this

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.Ibid., p. ۳۹ -۱

.way, it prepares the grounds for the correct understanding of objects

Understanding is not merely the reflection of external matter in the mind. It is only after the reflection of external matter is transformed inside the mind through a series of mental processes, which originate in the nonmaterial substance of the soul, that .understanding becomes possible

Hence, action is the origin of thought and thought is the origin of action. Action is the .test of thought and at the same time thought is the test of action

This is not a vicious circle. Man's nobility lies in his wisdom, faith, and dignity, and in turn his work is valuable because through it he acquires these virtues. Man is the creator of his work, and, at the same time, he is also its product. This is the distinguishing characteristic of man, which is not found in any other being, and which (is derived from a mode of Divine creation special to his species. (۱

Mans' creativity in relation to work is inventive and positive, while work's formative power in relation to man is only quantitative. It means that man actually creates his own work, but work does not really create a man. It is work, exercise, and repetitive practice, which provide the grounds for the making of man from within. Whenever there is a reciprocal relationship between two things which is inventive and positive from one side and quantitative and numerical from the other, the former is prior to .the latter

,Hence man

".See Murtada Mutahhari, Shinakht, "Epistemology -۱

whose essence is consciousness (`knowledge by presence' of his own self), has reciprocal relationship with work. Man creates work and work moulds man. Considering the fact that man is the necessary creative cause of work and work is merely a potential or quantitative cause of man, it may be said that man is prior to .work, and work is not prior to him

Priority o f the Social Existence o f Man Over His Individual Existence, or the Principle of .۴ Priority of Sociology Over Psychology

From the biological point of view, man is the most perfect of all animals. He has a kind of capacity for self…improvement which is specific to his kind. Man is endowed with a .(specific personality whose dimensions form his human Dasein (existence

As a result of continued experiences and learning, the philosophical and intellectual dimension of man's existence is shaped. And due to the influence of some other factors his existence gains another dimension which is the ethical dimension. It is this dimension which is the source of all values, and basis of the entire moral `musts' and .'`must nots

The artistic and religious dimensions are also evolved in a similar manner. Man himself styles a system of intellectual principles which serve as the basis of his thinking within the framework of his philosophical and intellectual dimensions. In the course of his judgments, he arrives at a set of absolute and semi-absolute (comparatively relative) values in the moral and social spheres of life. All these .dimensions combined together constitute human existence

Human dimensions are entirely effects of social factors. At the time of birth, man is devoid of all

these dimensions; he is actually like a raw material ready to acquire any form, ideological or emotional, depending upon the factors that exercise influence upon

him. He is like an empty pot that has to be filled from outside, like a blank recording .tape on which any sound can be recorded. Whatever is recorded on it is retrievable

To sum up, the actual maker of human personality, and whatever that transforms man from a `thing' into a `person,' is nothing but the external social factors, which combined together constitute that which is called social process. Man in himself is purely a `thing;' which is transformed into a `person' as a result of the impact of social factors. P. Royan in his Historical Materialism quotes from page ۴۲ of :Plekhanov's Fundamental Problems of Marxism

The characteristics of a social system are determined by the current level of development of the means of production of society. It means that when the stage of development of the means of production is determined, the characteristics of the social order and the psychology (of the people) related to it, and all the other corresponding relations within the system, on the one hand, and the ideas and the .pace of progress, on the other; are also (of their own accord) determined

:In the same book, it is further stated that

When psychology, through the means of production, is determined, ideology too, which is deeply rooted in the psychology of the people, is also consequently determined. But as the ideology

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at a particular historical stage is the product of social requirements, and as it always continues to protect the interests of the ruling class, it necessarily strengthens and .perfects the existing social structure

Hence the social structure in class...societies, which comes into existence for protecting the ruling class and propagating its ideology, is in reality the result of the social order and its requirements, and, in the last analysis, is the product of the .character of the modes and the means of production

For instance, the church and the mosque are for preaching of the religious beliefs,

which in all the religions are based upon the faith in the final judgment or resurrection. The belief in resurrection is the logical outcome of the particular social order that is based upon the division of society into classes, which in its turn is the product of a particular stage of development of the means of production. Hence, belief in resurrection is the product of the means of production (at a particular stage of social .(development

In contrast to this principle is another anthropological principle which is based upon the view that the foundation of human personality, from which man's intellect and higher ideals arise, is itself inherent in human nature, ingrained in him by the agents which are responsible for his creation. It is correct that man, contrary to the well-… known theory of Plato, is not born with a ready…made and finished personality, but the real foundation of his personality is inborn, not

p: ٩٥

.acquired from the society

If we want to interpret this idea in philosophical terms, we shall have to say that the real source of the human dimensions of man's existence…including the moral, religious, philosophical, artistic, scientific, literary, and emotional dimensions… have their origin in his rational self, which is man's distinguishing characteristic, and is bestowed upon him by the process of creation itself. Society fosters man, nurtures him, or distorts him according to his individual aptitudes. At first the rational self is .potential, and then it gradually attains actuality

In this way, man, according to the basic principles of thought, and also according to the principle governing his material and intellectual inclinations and aptitudes, is like all the other living beings, whose all faculties are potential in the beginning, and as a result of a series of mutational movements (harakat jawhariyyah) gradually actualize, .develop, and attain perfection

Man, under the influence of external factors, nourishes and cultivates his innate personality and attains perfection, or sometimes he deviates from the normal course

and distorts it. This is the same principle which in Islamic writings is called the "principle of nature," and is regarded as the mother principle in Islamic teachings.

On the basis of the principle of nature, human psychology is prior to human sociology. Sociology itself originates in human psychology. According to this principle of nature, although at the time of birth man possesses neither perception nor imagination, neither the power of judgment nor human aptitudes; he however is born with

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some existential dimensions besides his animal dimensions.

It is because of the same dimensions that he gradually evolves a sequence of abstract ideas and judgments (in philosophical and logical terms, the `secondary concepts') which form the real foundation of human thought, and without which any kind of logical reasoning is impossible. The same dimensions develop a series of sublime aspirations in man, and are considered to. be the foundation of human personality.

According to the theory of priority of human sociology over human psychology, man is merely a passive receiver, not an active seeker. He is a raw material which is indifferent to any form given to him, a blank tape on which any song can be recorded. In it there is no kind of inherent movement towards any fixed preordained form.

Whatever form is given to it is accepted without causing any distortion; because it neither has any form of its own, nor is any form alien to it. The tape does not require any particular song, because of its ability to receive any song without being alienated or estranged from its own essence or nature. The relation of this raw material to all forms, the relation of the tape to all songs, and the relation of the pot to whatever fills it, are similar and of the same kind.

But according to the principle of nature and the principle of priority of human psychology over human sociology, although in the beginning man lacks actual understanding and actual inclinations, from within

he moves in a dynamic way towards a series of primary judgments, which are called a priori or primary principles. He also moves towards a series of higher, sublime values .which constitute his ideals of humanity

After that a set of simple ideas, which are the primary elements of thought (and are called in philosophical term `primary concepts'), enters into his mind from outside; those principles emerge in the form of a system of theoretical or practical judgments, and the innate human inclinations gradually assume definite form in the course of .time

According to the first theory, man, under the existing conditions, believes for example, that the arithmetical formula, ۲ x ۲ = ۴, as being absolutely true for all times and places. But actually this belief is a product of specific conditions; which means that it is due to the prevailing conditions which make it true, and it is just possible that under different conditions and a different environment the judgment would be quite different, such .as ۲ x ۲ = ۲۶

But according to the second theory, although the external conditions help man to arrive at the idea of numbers ۲, ۴, ۸, ۱۰ and so on, but the calculations like ۲ x ۲ = ۴ or ۵ x ۵ = ۲۵ are essential products of the human mind, and it is impossible for them to have different forms: Similarly the perfectionist tendencies of human nature are also (inseparably essential characteristics of man's mind or soul. (۱

Priority of Material Aspect of Society over its Intellectual Aspect .۵

Society is comprised of

For further elaboration see `Allamah Tabitaba'i, Usul\_a falsafeh wa rawish\_a – ۱ riydlism, particularly Chapter V, ("The Source of Plurality in Impressions"). Also refer to `Allamah Tabataba'i, al_Mizan, vol. XVI, (Persian Translation), p. ۱۹۰, for discussion on `the Divine Covenant'; also see vol. XXXI, p. ۳۰۳, for the discussion on the meaning of

.natural religion. Also refer to other brief comments scattered through this exegesis

different strata, classes, and structures: economic, cultural, administrative, political, religious, legal, etc. From this angle, a society seems to be quite similar to a complete house where a family dwells and which consists of a drawing room, bedroom, kitchen, .toilet etc

One of the different social structures is that which serves the purpose of the base or the foundation of the whole structure, upon which stands the system and the superstructure. If it is disturbed or collapses, the whole structure is necessarily bound to fall. It is the economic structure of the society. The social structure of the society consists of whatsoever is related with its system of material production, such as tools .and means of production, sources and relations of production

Tools of production, which comprise the most important part of the social structure, are themselves always changing and developing. Every stage in the development of the tools of production, necessitates a specific system of relations of production which .negates all that existed prior to it in the society

The type of relations of production existing in a society depends upon particular laws and conditions concerning the institution of ownership, which really means the laws and conditions that govern the members of society and their conventional relationship with the sum. total of the product of society. With inevitable changes in the relations of production, the basis of all legal, intellectual, moral, religious, philosophical, and scientific principles is bound to change. In one sentence: economy .is the foundation of society

In the book Marx

and Marxism, a passage from Marx's preface to his work The Critique of Political :Economy is quoted

In the social production of their life, men enter into specific relations that are

indispensible and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of man that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (۱)

In the same book Marx's letter to Annenkov is also quoted:

Assume a particular state of development in the productive facilities of man and you will get a corresponding form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular degrees of development of production, commerce, and consumption and you will have a corresponding organization of the family, or orders or of classes, in a word a corresponding civil society. (۲)

Peter explains Marx's view in the following words:

In this fashion Marx has compared the society to a building, the base and foundation of which are the economic institutions, whose superstructure (the building itself) is comprised of political, religious, and legal patterns, customs and norms.

As in the case of a building, it depends upon the position of its base and foundation,

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۱- Andre Peter, op. cit. p. ۲۴۶, Appendix III. See also Raymond Aron, op. cit., p. ۱۶۳. See also Anwar Khameh'i , Tajdid-e nazar talabi az Marz ta Mao, "Revisionism from Marx to Mao," p. ۱۵۳.

۲- Andre Peter, op. cit., p. ۲۴۷, Appendix III.

the economic forms (relations of production) and technical modes are also dependent upon and associated with the modes of thinking, the political system and the customs,

(and each of them is subject to economic conditions. (1)

The same book quotes from Lenin's Marx…Engels Marxism a passage reproduced :from the third volume of The Capital

The mode of production manifests itself in the human activity in relation to nature and, followini that, in social conditions and intellectual patterns resulting from them. ((2)

The same book quotes further from the Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of :Political Economy

My investigations led to the result that the legal relations as well as forms of the state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so…called-general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions (of life ….the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy. (3)

:Marx, in his book The Poverty of Philosophy, has written

Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces, men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand mill gives you a society with the feudal lord; the steam…mill, a (society with the industrial capitalist. (4)

The theory of the primacy of material structure of society in relation to other social formations corresponds to the theory of priority of action over thought. The theory of priority of

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.Ibid., p. ۳۳ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۲۴۸ -۲

.Ibid., p. ۳۲ -۳

.Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, (Moscow), p. ۱۲۲ -۴

action over thought is applicable to the individual level, and the theory of priority of material aspect over other social aspects is actually based upon the theory of priority .of action over thought but at the level of society

Since the advocates of this view also advocate the theory of priority of human sociology over human psychology, hence the priority of individual action over individual thought is a form and result of the theory of priority of material aspect over .other social aspects

Contrarily, if human sociology is considered to be prior to human psychology, the priority of material aspect of society over its other aspects would be considered as .the effect and result of the priority of individual action over individual thought

The material aspect of society, which may be also termed as the economic structure or economic base, consists of two constituents: firstly, the tools of production, which are the product of man's relation with nature; and, secondly, the economic relations of the members of society on the grounds of distribution of wealth, which are sometimes termed as the "relations of production." Often both of them are referred to (as "the means of production" or "the mode of production." (١

It should be noted that these terms used by the founders of historical materialism are not free from ambiguity, and are not well defined and specific.(٢) When they say that economy is the base and the material aspect of society is prior to other social aspects, they mean the whole

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See P. Niketin, Elements of Economics, Persian translation by Nasir Zarafshan, page -١ .(iii, P. Royan, Historical Materialism, (chapter on…production

Anwar Khameh'i, Tajdid…e nazar talabi az Marz ta Mao, "Revisionism from Marx to -٢ .Mao," p. ٢٥٣

system of production, but generally refer to the…tools of production and relations of .production

Special attention should be paid to an important point fully explicit in the writings of the founders of historical materialism that the base itself is two…tiered; a part of it acts as the base for the other part, which is built upon it. The basis, the real foundation at the bottom of the structure consists of the tools of production, i.e. the physical labour materialized. It is the physical labour which creates and posits particular .economic relations according to the distribution of wealth

These relations, which reflect the degree of the development of the tools of production, are not only in harmony with the tools of production, but are also considered to be their incentive and motivating force. It means that the specific economic relations in a society are the means of deriving the greatest benefit from the tools of production. They are like a garment tailored to fit the body, i.e. the means .of production

But the tools of production in themselves are subject to development. Any change in the tools of production can disturb the harmony between the two constituent parts of the system of production. The productive and economic relations, i.e. those laws which were evolved to suit the earlier tools of production, become outdated in the same manner as a child's dress does not fit the fully grown…up man, and hinders his .free movement

Similarly the primitive tools do not suit a more

developed society and obstruct its growth by creating contradiction between the two tiers of production structure. The new tools of production are inevitably established and the base, i.e. the economic structure of society, is totally transformed and, in consequence of this change, the legal, moral, philosophical, and religious .superstructure is also overthrown

Keeping in mind the primacy of collective labour, i.e. labour materialized which is represented by the tools of production, and also considering the fact that Marx is one of those sociologists who regard sociology as being prior to psychology, who also

considers man qua man as a social being or in his own words “sui generic”, the philo… sophical role of labour according to Marxism…which is the essence of the Marxist .philosophy and to which little attention has been paid becomes clear

Marx gives the same importance to human labour in the context of human existence that Descartes gives to the rational being of man, Bergson to the dynamic aspect of .human existence, and Jean Paul Sartre to man's feeling of guilt

Descartes says, “I think, therefore I am” (Cogito ergo sum). Bergson says, “I have continuity, therefore I exist.” Sartre says, “I feel…guilty, therefore I exist.” Marx would ”.have said, “I work, therefore I exist

Apart from these diverse modes of existence (thought, continuity, guilt etc.), none of these thinkers tries to posit human existence or `ego' in absolute terms. Some of them even maintain that man's existence cannot be conceived beyond and apart from one of these specific modes. Moreover, everyone

of them wants to define man's essence and reality of human existence in these terms .only

For instance, Descartes intends to say, “My existence is synonymous with the ”.existence of my thought; eliminate thought, and I am nothing

Bergson intends to say, “Human existence is identical with continuity and time ”.((duration

Sartre also intends to say that “man's essence and actuality of his existence lies in the ”.sense of guilt; take away guilt from human nature, and man is nothing

Marx also in his turn intends to say, “The whole of man's existence and his actual being is work. Work is the essence of humanity; I labour, therefore I am. It is not in this sense that work is the proof of the existence of my self, but in the sense that work ”.itself is identical with the existence of my self; work is my actual existence

Marx says, "For a socialist person the entire so…called history of the world is nothing but begetting of man through human labour."(۱) He distinguishes human consciousness from man's real existence, and says, "It is not the consciousness of man that determines his being, but his social being that determines his consciousness. (۲)"'

He further says that the premises with which we start are not self…willed or absolute, but are derived from real individuals, their actions, and from material conditions of existence. He explains the term "real individual" in the following words: "But the real individuals act not according to the whims which cross their

p: ۱۰۵

۱- Marx, Engels, Selected Works, "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy."

۲- Ibid.

imagination... but according to what they materially produce and make; i.e. they act on the basis of definite material conditions and certain limitations… conditions which are independent of their will." (۱)

Engels says: "Labour is the source of all wealth, the political economists assert... but it is infinitely more than this. It is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this is true to such an extent that, in a way, we should say that it is labour which has created man himself."(۲) All these extracts from the writings of the founders of Marxism indicate their emphasis on the role of labour.

However, Marx and Engels have borrowed this idea regarding the role of labour from Hegel, who said, "The real being of man, in the first instance, is his action." (۳)

Hence, according to Marxism, existence of man is primarily social and not individual. Secondly, the social existence of man is synonymous with his materialized labour, i.e. collective labour. All individual modes like feelings and emotions, or all social modes such as morality, philosophy, art, religion etc. are only expressions and manifestations of man's real being; they are not identical with his being itself:

Accordingly, the actual evolution of man is identical with the development of collective labour. But intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development or evolution of the social system is only a manifestation and reflection of the real development and not the development itself. The material development of a society is the criterion of its .intellectual development

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.Anwar Khameh'i , op. cit., p. ١۶٧ -١
.Fredrik Engels, Labour in Transition from Ape to Man -٢
.A. Peter, op. cit,, ٣٩ -٣

action is the criterion for judging thought, truth or falsity of an idea is also judged through action and not by intellectual or logical standards. In the same way, the .measure of intellectual development also is material development

Hence, if the question arises as to which school of philosophy, morality, religion or art is more progressive, the intellectual and logical standards cannot provide the answer to this question. The only criterion should be to see what are the conditions of which that particular school of thought is the product and manifestation, and at which stage .of development of social labour or tools of production it has emerged

This type of thinking is, of course, very strange to people like us who consider the real existence of man as his own `self' and this `self,' too, an immaterial substance and a product of mutational movements of nature and not the product of society. But for one like Marx, who thinks in material terms and does not believe in the immaterial substance, is bound to interpret the essence of man and his a۶tuality from a biological point of view, and say that the essence of man is identical with the physical constitution of his body, as the ancient materialists, like the materialists of the eighteenth century, believed. But Marx has rejected the mechanistic view of life and has claimed that the being of man is grounded in society not in nature. Whatever has been formed by nature is the potential human being, not

.the actual one

Furthermore, either Marx should regard thought as the essence of humanity, and work as the manifestation and expression of thought or, on the contrary; he should consider labour as the essence of humanity and thought as the manifestation and .expression of labour

Marx, being a materialist, not only does approve of the primacy of matter in the individual, but also rejects the idea of any supra material essence besides the individual's material existence. In the context of society and history also, he accedes .to the priority of matter. As a result he has to adopt the second alternative

Here a basic difference between the point of view of Marx and that of other materialists concerning the nature of history comes to light. Every materialist, since he considers man and other manifestations of his existence as material, inevitably tends to regard history also as materialistic. But what Marx says is more than this. Marx tries to say that history is essentially economic in character, and in economics, .too, the economic relations of production occupy the most important place

Since he considers the economic and production relations, i.e. the relation of workers with the products of their labour, as essential and necessary, derived from the stage of development of the tools of production, Marx's viewpoint is… that history is .determined by the tools or instruments of production

Merely to say that history is materialistic in nature, or to say that history is economic in nature, is not enough to define the

Marxian viewpoint. We should notice that according to Marx the essence and nature of history is “instrumentalist.” I, in some of my works,(۱) have termed Marx's historical materialism as an “instrumentalist theory,” which is opposed to my own “humanistic .theory” of history

Actually, the manner in which Marx is absorbed in his philosophy of labour and conceives the idea of `social labour,' shows that human beings as he conceives them are not the same as those who walk in the streets and think and resolve, but as if they are, in fact, like tools and machines in factories. Human beings who walk, talk, and think are seen as images of the `real' human beings conceived by Marx.

Marx's view of social labour and tools of production seems to advance a view according to which man is a being who acts blindly and mechanically without any resolution and will. He is merely a shadow of man, not man himself, whose development and progress is determined strictly externally and who has no will or purpose of his own, and is forced to follow a predetermined path blindly.

It may be said that whatever Marx has said regarding the priority of collective labour over the conscious mind and human will sounds to be quite similar to the views expressed by some of the religious thinkers about the unconscious functionings of human organs, such as the functioning of digestive system, heart, liver etc., which are considered to operate under the influence of a hidden single will.

۱- Murtada Mutahhari, Qiyam wa inqilab…e Mahdi.

According to these thinkers, desires, wishes, 'oughts' and `ought nots,' and consequently the matters which are related to the practical aspect of the mind, i.e. the lower, functional, and physiological sides of the human self, which appear on the surface of the conscious mind and without its knowing their origin, are reflections of a series of compulsive natural needs originating from the subconscious. It is similar to what has been termed by Freud as the subconscious or the unconscious, which dominates the conscious mind.

The views of those ancient thinkers and that of Freud, however, relate to a part of the conscious mind and to the influence of a concealed consciousness. Besides, whatever they talk about is not external to human existence; but what Marx says is external to human existence.

Careful observation shows that Marx's theory is quite astonishing from the .philosophical point of view

Marx compares his own discovery with the well‑known biological discovery of Darwin. Darwin has proved that a process quite external to the animal's will and consciousness gradually and unconsciously causes biological changes in the course of time. Marx also claims that a blind process (identical with the real existence of man) gradually and unconsciously causes the formation of the social structure, i.e. all the things named by Marx as superstructure, and even a part of the base also, i.e. the .socio‑economic relations

He says, “Darwin has called the attention of scientists towards the history of natural selection, the formation of organs in plants and animals corresponding to the

p: ۱۱۰

means of production necessary for their survival. Isn't the history of generation and formation of organs producing the social human being, i.e. the material basis of all types of social organizations, worthy of such a treatment? ...Natural selection lays bare the modes of human action vis-à-vis nature; the mode of production lays bare man's material existence, and as a result, the source of social relations, thought, and (intellectual products that spring from it.” (۱

It is quite obvious from all that we have said about the theory of historical materialism that it is based on several other theories, some of which are psychological and others .are sociological, some philosophical and others anthropological

Conclusions

point

The theory of historical materialism itself leads to a series of conclusions which are influential in practical social strategy. Historical materialism is not merely a theoretical and intellectual approach without relevance to social behaviour and social choice. .Now we have to see what sort of conclusions can be drawn from it

The first conclusion is related to the problem of study of society and history .١

On the basis of historical materialism, the best and the most reliable way to study and analyse historical and social events is to investigate their economic basis. Without studying the economic foundation of historical events, their correct understanding is impossible; because it is presumed that all social changes are materialistic in essence, even…though they may appear to have an independent cultural, religious, or moral .essence

It means that all these changes are reflections of the economic and material conditions of society, being their effects. Ancient thinkers also claimed that knowledge of

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.Anwar Khameh'e, op. cit., p. ٢٢٣, quoted from Marx and Engels, Selected Works -١

objects by means of identification of their causes is the most reliable and the best way .of understanding them

Hence, if we assume that the root cause of all social changes is the economic structure of society, the best way of studying history is socio…economic analysis. In other words, as the cause has priority over its effects, at the stage of study, also, priority lies with it. Hence, the priority of economic base exists not only at the level of external reality, but it is also to be observed at the level of intellectual inquiry and .study

In the book Revisionism from Marx to Mao, this problem has been discussed as :follows

For analysing social revolutions, one must not judge social conflicts in political, legal, or ideological terms; on the contrary, they are to be interpreted in terms of the contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production. Marx has seriously warned us of the dangers of such a judgment, firstly because such a judgment is not realistic, for it replaces the cause, which economic changes and

contradictions are, by the effect, i.e. political, legal, and ideological forms, which are .the effects

Secondly, such an interpretation is superficial; as instead of probing deeply into the real causes, it only touches upon the surface, and what is apparent reality is considered to be sufficient for explanation. Thirdly, it is illusory; because the superstructures, which are on the whole ideological, are nothing but inaccurate images of the reality. Depending on inaccurate images instead

p: ۱۱۲

of a realistic analysis of the problem under study, will no doubt lead us into confusion (and error. (۱

:Here the author quotes from the selected works of Marx and Engels

As in the case of an individual mere self…introspection does not help us to make any judgement, in the same way, during the period of disturbance and chaos, the ideas of (that period should not be treated as helpful for judging its character. (۲

Marx makes an attempt to reject the role of consciousness, thought, and innovation, which is generally considered to be a basic agent of development. For instance, Saint Simon, from whom Marx has borrowed a number of ideas, writing about the role of :creativity in the process of evolution, says

Societies are governed by two moral forces which are equally strong and operate alternately. One is the force of habit or custom, and the other is inclination towards innovation and creativity. After some time customs necessarily become evil ….At such times, the need for something new begins to be felt. It is this need which really (constitutes the revolutionary situation. (۳

Proudhon, another of Marx's teachers, says about the role of ideas and beliefs in the :evolution of societies

Political forms of nations have been the manifestations of their beliefs. Movement of

the forms, their transformation and annihilation are the tests which reveal the value of the underlying ideas, through which an absolute and unchangeable reality is revealed to us gradually. But we see that all political institutions necessarily seek adjustment with

p: ١١٣

.Ibid., p. ١٥٥ -١

.Ibid -٢

.Ibid., p. ١٨١ -٣

(the existing social conditions in order to be saved from inevitable death. (١

Despite all this, Marx claims that every social revolution, more than anything else, is a socio…economic necessity. It is caused by the process of polarization of civil social (structure, the forces of production and social relations.(٢

Marx tries to say that it is neither inventiveness and creativity nor revolutionary ideas and beliefs that are instrumental in the process of social change, but it is socio…economic necessity that makes men develop and embrace new revolutionary beliefs and ideologies. Hence if we try to apply the conclusions of historical materialism for analysing certain historical events such as the wars of Persia and Greece, or the Crusades, or the Islamic conquests, or the Renaissance in the West, or the constitutional movement in Iran, it would be a mistake to study and evaluate them from the viewpoint of superficial forms of these events, which are occasionally .political, religious, or cultural

It would not be right to accept even the views of the revolutionaries, who might have regarded those movements as religious, cultural, or political as a criterion. We should concentrate our attention on the real substance of those movements, which is .economic and material in essence, in order to arrive at correct conclusions

Nowadays we see that the contemporary Marxists, while trying to explain any historical movement, snatch some rudimentary facts from here and there, and

without having any authentic and conclusive information about it discuss the economic conditions of the past events

p: ۱۱۴

.Ibid., p. ۱۹۸ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۱۸۳ -۲

.and movements

The law governing history is deterministic, inviolable, and external to human will .۲

In previous chapters, I have already discussed whether a series of binding causal laws rules history. I have also explained that some people in the name of accidents, and others on account of the freedom of human will, have rejected the law of causation and consequently negated the existence of certain necessary permanent .laws for society and history

But I have proved that such a theory is baseless. The law of causation, and consequently the necessary relation between cause and effect, governs history in the .same manner as it governs other natural phenomena

In addition to it I have also proved that society and history have an organic unity and objective existence, and, therefore, possess a specific nature, whose laws are necessary and universal. Hence according to the previous statement, a series of general and necessary laws govern history and society. We shall term this type of necessity as `philosophical necessity.' This necessity is responsible for directing the .course of history according to a series of definite and necessary laws

But the Marxist notion of historical determinism means economic determinism. It is a. unique interpretation of philosophical necessity. This theory synthesizes two different theories. The first one is the conception of philosophical necessity, which holds that no accident can occur without a cause. Occurrence of every historical phenomenon is made inevitable and certain due to presence of particular causes responsible for .bringing it into existence. No accident can occur in absence of its causes

The second theory is that of

p: ۱۱۵

the primacy of material foundation of society as against other foundations. This theory has already been discussed earlier. The necessary corollary of these theories is materialistic determinism of history, i.e. dependence of the superstructure on the base is necessary and inevitable. Any change in the base necessarily brings about change in the superstructure. Without a change in the base, any change in the superstructure is absolutely impossible.

That which, according to the Marxist claim, makes Marxist socialism `scientific,' and makes it assume the garb of a natural law like other natural laws, is the very principle of historical determinism. According to this principle the tools of production, which are the most fundamental part of the economic structure, continue to develop according to a system of natural laws.

Their development is similar to the evolution of animals and plants which in the course of several hundred million years continued their gradual development, attaining new forms at every stage. As changes in species and evolution in animals and plants are independent of their own will and desire, the process of development and evolution of the tools of production also takes place automatically.

In the course of their gradual development, the tools of production pass through certain stages. At every stage they cause irresistible transformation in all social modes, and this process is irresistible. Before it reaches a specific stage of development, the possibility of initiative changes in the superstructure of the society does not exist.

The socialists, and in general the advocates of a

p: ۱۱۶

just social order, who do not pay much attention to the possibilities realized through the development of the tools of production, and merely cherish the desire for social

justice and socialism on sentimental grounds, cannot achieve anything; they waste their time and energy in futile daydreaming. Karl Marx, in his preface to the first :German edition of The Capital, says

The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future.(۱)... And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement ultimately ...it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive .phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth pangs

Marx himself has expounded certain points in the latter part of his statement, which either have been ignored or underestimated. He is actually trying to answer a possible .question and objection

Someone might have said: "The step…by…step development of society follows irresistibly the orderly step…by…step development in nature only, as long as man does not understand this process and fails to discover it. But as soon as man understands it, it comes under his control and domination. It is said that as long as man does not understand nature, it dominates him, but as soon as he understands it, nature becomes his obedient servant. For example, a disease remains uncured as long as its causes and cures are

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۱ - That is, technology and industry and as a result the social superstructure of the industrialized countries advance on a fixed and determined course. The course of movement of societies is a one…dimensional movement. The industrialized countries in every aspect represent the models of what the underdeveloped countries will become at some time in the future, and have not yet reached that stage. The possibility that the underdeveloped countries may reach this stage of development without passing through the stages covered by the industrialized countries of today, is .non…existent

unknown, but as soon as it is understood, it becomes curable and is eradicated. In the

".same manner cyclones and other natural calamities may be prevented

To elaborate the above…quoted statement, what 'Marx wants to say is this: The orderly step by step movement of society is a kind of organic change. It is the type of .automatic internal movement of things, like the growth of animals and plants

It is a kind of motion which is not mechanical. But changes brought about in things by means of external factors, like all technical and industrial changes, and other changes imposed on nature by applying external pressures, such as killing of insects by insecticides or elimination of bacteria by means of drugs, are mechanistic. When the knowledge of natural laws is employed by man to subjugate nature, the relation .between man and nature is mechanical

In the case of organic transformations and internal and essential movements of things, the utmost role that human knowledge and consciousness can play is to act in accordance with them, and to apply his knowledge for extracting the greatest benefit .from them

Man, by discovering the laws governing the growth and evolution of plants and animals…and of these are the laws governing the growth of embryo inside the animal's womb…also discovers the necessity and unchangeability of those irresistible .laws

Marx means to say that, social development of man, which is subject to development in the tools of production, is a kind of organic, autogenetic, essential, and spontaneous evolution

from within, that cannot be controlled by knowledge or consciousness. Man is compelled to pass through the specific stages of a determined social evolution, just as an embryo has to undergo a definite course of development inside the womb. Any .idea of changing that course is nothing but futile

It is not possible for society to reach the highest stage without passing through

certain intermediate stages. It is also impossible for a society to reach the highest .stage by adopting a course different from the paths determined by history

The Marxist conception of social evolution as a spontaneous, unconscious, or involuntary, natural, and necessary process resembles the Socratic conception of human mind, according to which ideas are inborn. Socrates used the dialectical method in his teachings. He believed that if the questions were asked step…by…step in a systematic way with an accurate knowledge of the workings of the mind, it finds the .answers automatically and naturally without any external guidance

Socrates was the son of a midwife. He used to say that he performed the same duty with minds as his mother performed in regard to pregnant women. A midwife does not give birth to a child. It is nature which makes mother deliver the child at a certain time. In spite of this she needs the services of the midwife, who takes care that any untoward incident does not happen which may endanger the life of the mother or the .child

From the Marxist point of view, though the knowledge of

the laws of sociology and philosophy of history does not cause a social change, yet the knowledge of sociology and philosophy of history is valuable. And scientific socialism is nothing but the discovery of these laws. The least service it can render is to liberate .minds from the influence of utopian socialism and sentimental advocacy of justice

The laws of dynamics, on the contrary, although they are unchangeable and permanent, their knowledge offers an advantage, i.e. they are useful in predicting the future course. In the light of scientific sociology and scientific socialism the pattern of every society can be investigated. We can discover its present stage of development .and predict its future course

Consequently, one can know in which stage of embryonic development is the baby of socialism in the womb of society. At every stage one must expect only what it is right

to expect of that stage, avoiding all undue expectations. A society which is still in the stage of feudalism should not be expected to enter into the phase of socialism; because, a four-month-old embryo cannot be expected to be born immediately as a .fully developed baby

Marxism makes an attempt to identify the natural-dynamic stages of society, and discover such inviolable laws of evolution of societies which are applicable to the .transition of society from one epoch to another

According to Marxism, all societies have to pass through four phases of development in order to reach the stage of socialism, viz. the period of primitive communism, the

p: ۱۲۰

period of slavery, the period of capitalism, and the period of socialism. Sometimes instead of four periods five, six, or even seven, periods are enumerated, which means that the periods of slavery, capitalism, and socialism may be further divided into two .sub-periods

Each historical period is quite different from the other period in character and nature .۳

As the process of evolution changes one species into another, in case of historical epochs the same thing happens. Every period of history has its own specific laws; the laws belonging to an earlier period or any of the latter periods can never be applied to .a certain period of history

Water, as long as it is water, follows the laws governing liquids; but when the same water is converted into steam, it does not follow those laws but becomes subject to .the laws of gases

Society also follows this principle; for example, as long as it is in the stage of feudalism it has to follow the laws peculiar to feudalism, but as soon as it leaves back that stage and reaches the stage of capitalism, any effort to retain the laws belonging to .feudalism would be absurd

Accordingly, a society cannot have any eternal and absolute laws. According to the theory of historical materialism and the doctrine that economy is the base, all the laws that are claimed to be `eternal' are actually dependent upon the base and so .transient

One of the basic differences between historical materialism and religion, specially Islam, is that religion firmly believes in the eternity of a set of (Divine) laws. The

book Revisionism from Marx to Mao, quotes from an appendix to the second edition :of The Capital

Every period of history has laws of its own... accordingly as life passes from one stage to another stage, it evolves and is governed by a new set of laws. Economic life, in the course of its historical development, brings forth a phenomenon that we come across in various branches of biology... social organisms are distinguished from one another (in the same way as animal and plant organisms are differentiated. (۱

From the dawn of history, it is development in the tools of production that is .۴ responsible for giving rise to private ownership and dividing society into the two classes of the exploiters and the exploited. These two main classes have represented .the two basic poles of society from the beginning of history to the present day

There has been, and always there shall be, a struggle and antagonism between these two poles of society. But bipolarization of society does not mean that all groups are either exploiters or exploited. Possibly there may be certain groups who are neither exploiters nor exploited. What is meant is that the important groups that influence the fate of society are these two groups which form the two basic poles of society. Other .groups are dependent on one of these two main groups

:In Revisionism from Marx to Mao, the author writes

We find two different patterns of division of society according to classes and their conflicts; according to Marx

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.Anwar Khameh'i , op.cit., p. ۲۲۵ -۱

and Engels: one is bipolar, and the other is multipolar. Definition of class also differs in both the patterns.(۱) In the first pattern it is an imaginary class, while in the other it is a real class. The rules regarding the divisions of classes are also different. Engels, in his preface to The Peasants' War in Germany tries to reconcile these two patterns by evolving a uniform standard for class division. He distinguishes various classes in society, and, within each class, he differentiates various subgroups. But according to his belief, there are only two classes who accomplish a definite historic mission: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; because they form the really opposite poles of (society.(۲

According to the philosophy of Marxism, as it is impossible for the superstructure of a society to precede its infrastructure, similarly it is also impossible for society to be considered as unified whole at the level of superstructure despite its being divided at the level of the base (social and economic relations, and property relations) into two poles of the exploiters and the exploited. Social consciousness. itself is also, in its turn, to be analysed into two types, i.e. the consciousness of the exploiters and the .consciousness of the exploited

Thus two types of world outlooks, two ideologies, two moral systems, and two types of philosophy emerge in society. Social and economic conditions of each class inspire a specific type of thinking, a specific social point of view, a particular taste, and a particular social

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By a ` real class' what is meant is a group of people whose economic life, and profits -۱ and losses are common. An imaginary class on the other hand is supposed to consist .of people leading diverse types of social existence but following a single ideology

.Anwar Khameh i , op. cit., p..۳۴۵ -۲

.attitude and approach in each class

It is not possible that a class's consciousness, taste, and manner of thinking should precede its economic situation. The only things that are not bipolar and which are .specific to the class of exploiters are religion and state

Religion and state are invented by the exploiting class for the surrender and subjugation of the exploited. As the exploiting class is the owner of all material resources of society, they impose their own culture and their religion on the .oppressed

In this manner the culture of the ruling class, i.e. the world outlook of the ruling class, their ideology, their morality, their tastes, their sensibility, and more than everything, the religion of the rulers, is predominant; and the culture belonging to the oppressed remains always dominated like themselves, obstructing their progress. In German :Ideology Marx says

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The .... class which has the means of material production at its disposal

The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas, hence of the relations ..which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance

The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. In so far, as they rule as a class and determine

the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self…evident that they do this in its whole range; hence among other things they rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of ideas of their age: thus their (ideas are the ruling ideas of epoch.(۱

The class of the rulers and exploiters is by nature reactionary, conservative, traditionalist and obscurantist. Its culture, which is imposed by force is also reactionary, traditionalist, and obscurantist. But the oppressed and the victimized .class is by nature revolutionary, anti…traditionalist, progressive, and futurist

Their culture, which is oppressed like them, is a revolutionary, rebellious, and progressive culture. The condition of being… oppressed is the essential condition for .being revolutionary, i.e. this is the only class which is capable of being revolutionary

In the book Revisionism from Marx to Mao, after the passage which I have quoted :from Engel's prefatory note to The Peasants' War in Germany is written

One year after the publication of this prefatory note, (prefatory note to ThePeasants' War in Germany) the Congress of the German Socialists has written in its Gotha .Program that all classes form a reactionary front against the labour class

Marx severely criticized this statement. But if we are logical, we should admit the fact that since these miserable socialists could not possibly differentiate between his .bipolar or multipolar patterns after what Marx had written in the Manifesto

In the Manifesto (Manifesto of the Communist Party), Marx presents the class conflicts of those

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.Karl Marx, German Ideology, p. ۶۷ -۱

days as the war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. He writes: "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a (revolutionary class."(۱

In some of his remarks, Marx has himself said that the only class that fulfils all conditions and qualifications of being a revolutionary class is the proletariat, and :these conditions mean

.The condition of being oppressed; they should be productive also .۱

The condition of being propertyless (the peasants also fulfil this and the first .۲ .(condition

Organisation, which requires centralization and solidarity (the class of proletariat, .۳ who work together inside the factories, alone fulfil this condition, while peasants, who .(work on fields scattered in different lands, do not

Regarding the second characteristic Marx says: “The worker is free in two ways: free to sell his labour, and free of every kind of property.” And regarding the third characteristic he says in the Manifesto, “With the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, but it also becomes concentrated in greater (masses. Its power increases, and it becomes conscious of that power.” (۲

The above…mentioned doctrine can be termed as `the doctrine of correspondence between the ideological foundation and the class and social foundation.' On the basis of this doctrine, every class produces a certain type of thought, ideas, morality, philosophy, art, and poetry which fulfil the requirements of its life…style, economic conditions and interests. We can also name it `the doctrine of correspondence between the source of every thought

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.Anwar Khameh'i …, op. cit., p. ۳۴۷ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۳۵۷ -۲

'.and its direction

It means that all types of thought and all kinds of moral and religious systems originating from a particular class will suit the interests of that class only. It is not possible that a system of thought originating from a certain class should aim to serve the interests of the other class, or a system of thought evolved by a particular class .may serve the interests of humanity without having a particular class orientation

Thought can become humanistic and can transcend the class only when the development in the tools of production reaches a stage which affirms the abolition of all classes. It means that by negating class contradictions, ideological contradictions are also negated, and by negating the basis of ideological contradictions, the contradictions between different currents of thought are also negated.

Marx, in some of his earlier works written in young age (Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right), was more interested in the political aspect of classes (the rulers and the ruled) than the economic aspect (exploitation and the exploited). He considered class conflicts as wars for independence and freedom from bondage. He suggested two stages of these wars: the first as the partial and political stage, and the second as the total and humanistic stage.

He stated that the proletarian revolution is the last stage of the revolution of the enslaved of history. A revolution is the basis of total emancipation of man from all sorts and forms of domination and servitude. Marx

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has tried to solve the problem as to how a class transcends its class character and proceeds forward to attain a goal which is universal and human, and at the same time to reconcile this notion with the laws of historical materialism.

He explains that as subordination of this class is a fundamental fact, its revolution also is of basic significance. This class has not been subjected to any particular injustice, but the very essence of injustice itself is imposed upon it, thus stimulating it to aspire for the ideals of justice and human freedom.

This explanation, if poetic, is by no means scientific. What does Marx mean by the "essence of injustice" itself being imposed upon a class? Is it so that the exploiting class before assuming that role had to adopt this course according to a different logic and indulged in the acts of tyranny for the sake of tyranny, not for exploitation, and pursued the acts of injustice for the sake of injustice, not with the purpose of exploitation, as a consequence of which the proletariat reacted to obtain justice for

itself? Moreover, the assumption that the exploiting class reaches this position during the period of capitalism, is quite contrary to the doctrine of historical materialism, and .a kind of idealism

The doctrine of correspondence between the ideological and class bases requires that there should be correspondence between the source of a thought and its orientation. It also requires that there should be a relation between the inclination of

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an individual and the particular school of thought which is the product of his own class; i.e. the natural propensity of every individual is towards the ideology which .originates in his own class and is useful for the interests of his own class

From the viewpoint of Marxist logic, this principle is of extraordinary sociological usefulness in understanding the nature of ideologies and the aspirations of social .classes

۵. The fifth conclusion is about the limited role of ideology, guidance, propaganda, exhortation and other such things, as they are matters associated with the superstructure in directing the society or social classes. Ordinarily it is presumed that ideology, propaganda, logical argument, education and upbringing, indoctrination and exhortation are capable of moulding and changing human thinking in accordance with .preferred ends

Keeping in mind the fact that the consciousness of every individual and every group is the product of their social and class character and is necessarily bound to reflect it, it .is also impossible for them to take a lead over or lag behind their class consciousness

The notion that the superstructure, and various phenomena related to it, is a source of social change is an idealistic conception of society and history. It means that the movement of the forces of the intelligentsia, reformers and revolutionaries is .self…propelling

In fact, it is frustration and deprivation of the class which from within inspires the

intelligentsia and motivates the spirit of reform and revolution, not any external factors like education, training, etc., or at least

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it is the class character which is responsible for preparing ground for these matters .automatically

The maximum role of ideology, leadership, and other enlightening activities is only to the extent that they help in awakening the consciousness of contradiction between classes, giving rise to self-consciousness in the oppressed class; or it helps in transforming a `class-in…itself,' into a `class…for…itself;' i.e. a class unconscious of its .class character into a class possessing class consciousness

Hence the sole intellectual factor that can mobilize a particular .class in a class society is awakening of consciousness to its condition of being exploited But other so…called universal humanitarian approaches such as love of justice and mankind cannot play any role in a class society divided into two groups of the exploiters and the exploited who are alienated from their own selves, and in which social consciousness has been split into two parts. It is true that with the development in the tools of production a proletarian government is established, abolishing class…distinctions, and man is .restored to his original classless existence

Human consciousness divided on the basis of ownership is again unified. At that time the approach of universal humanitarianism, reflecting the communistic pattern of ownership of the tools of…production, can play an effective role. Socialism, which is in fact a superstructure for a specific period of history, cannot be arbitrarily produced (.beforehand in any earlier period (as the Utopian Socialists desired

,Also, in any particular historical epoch in which society is divided into two classes

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the consciousness of a specific class can in no way be imposed on the other class, .there is nothing like common human consciousness

In class societies, therefore, any general and universal ideology without a class alignment cannot emerge. Every ideology that appears in class societies inevitably .possesses a specific class character

Even if such an impossibility should occur, it could not play any practical role. Accordingly, all the claims of religion, or at least that which in the form of guidance, preaching, moral advice, and exhortation addresses the whole humanity in the name of universal justice and equality for all, if not entirely deceptive, should at least be .considered utopian

۶ . The other conclusion we should infer is that all revolutionary figures, leaders, .guides, and heroes essentially arise from the exploited class

After demonstrating that it is only the exploited class that has the aptitude for enlightenment, reform, and revolution…only the condition of being oppressed and exploited can produce this aptitude, and at the most the super-structural factors may be credited for awakening class antagonism and self…consciousness…it becomes obvious that those prominent individuals who come forward to make the ideas of enlightenment instrumental in awakening class consciousness should themselves be .fellow sufferers belonging to the same class and sharing its class consciousness

As it is historically impossible for a super-structural pattern to precede its base, and for a class to have a social consciousness that precedes its class character; in the same way it is not possible that a person as a `leader' may

precede his class, demanding more than what is required by his own class. Similarly, it is also impossible for a person belonging to the exploiting class of society to stand .against his own class in the interests of the exploited class

:In the book, Revisionism from Marx to Mao, the author says

Another original contribution of The German Ideology is analysis of class

consciousness. Here Marx, contrary to his earlier works,(1) regards class consciousness as the product of the class itself; it does not come from without. The real consciousness is nothing but an ideology, because it is bound to give a generalized form to the interests of a particular class. But it does not exclude the fact that this consciousness, which is based upon the awareness of its own conditions, strengthens the interests of the class. In any case, the class cannot attain maturity .without producing its specific class consciousness

Marx's view affirms the division of labour within the working class itself, i.e. the intellectual work (the ideological work, leadership) and manual work. Some individuals become thinkers or ideologues of the class, while others rather passively accept and (act upon the ideas and concepts provided for them. (2

In the same book, while discussing Marx's philosophy with reference to the Manifesto :and Poverty of philosophy, the author says

In this way, awakening class consciousness and organizing it in the form of a `class…for…itself' is the task of the proletariat and also the result of its self…fuelled economic battle. This upheaval is neither brought about by

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.Karl Marx, German Ideology, pp. ۳۰۸…۳۰۹ -۱

.Anwar Khameh'e, op. cit,, p. ۳۱۴ -۲

any intellectual theory which is alien to the workers' movement, nor by any political .party

Marx condemns Utopian socialists who despite their proletarian inclination do not see the historical self…propulsion of the proletariat and their specific political movement …and try to replace with their fancies the gradual and self…motivated organization of (the proletariat into a class.(1

This principle is particularly important for understanding the Marxist viewpoint about

society and social inclinations, and the Marxist criteria for evaluating individuals, .especially leaders and social reformers

From whatever has been said above, it is obvious that Marx and Engels did not believe in any independent groups of intellectuals free of and above classes. That is, there is no room in the principles of Marxism to allow for the existence of such a class of intellectuals. If Marx occasionally makes statements contrary to this, it is because he .himself does not remain a Marxist

And such occasions, as we shall discuss later, when Marx has contradicted himself, are not rare. Now, the question arises as to how Marx and Engels explain their own position with regard to intellectuals in the light of the principles of Marxism. None of them belonged to the proletariat class. Both of them were philosophers, not workers, .yet they have produced the greatest theory of labour and working class

Marx's answer to this question is interesting. In the book Revisionism from Marx to :Mao, the author says

Marx has spoken little about the intellectuals. He apparently does not regard them as a special

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.Ibid. pp. ۳۱۹...۳۲۰ -۱

stratum of society, but a part of certain other classes, particularly the bourgeoisie. In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx considers academics, journalists, university teachers, and lawyers as the part of the bourgeois class, like priests and .army men

In the Manifesto, when he wants to mention the names of the theorists of the working class who by origin do not belong to it...like Engels and himself... he does not call them intellectuals, but regards them as `groups of people from the ruling class..., who have embedded themselves amongst the proletariat,' and `have brought many elements

(for the education and training of that class.(1)

Marx does not offer any explanation as to how he and Engels tumbled down from the skies of the ruling class to the depths of the subject class, and how they could manage to bring with them those precious gifts for the teaching and training of the downtrodden and the "dha matrabah" 'The destitute' as the Quran calls them (90:17).

In reality, whatever Marx and Engels could attain...and through them the lower and the downtrodden class of the proletariat could not be attained by Adam, the father of mankind, who according to the religious tradition, fell from heaven to earth. Adam could not bring such a gift along with him.

Marx does not explain as to how the ideology which can liberate the proletariat takes shape in the minds of the ruling class. In addition to this, he offers no explanation as to whether this descent

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1- Ibid., p. 340.

or declassing is especially reserved for only these two persons, or if it is possible for others too.

He also does not throw any light on the matter that if sometimes, though in exceptional cases, the doors of heaven are opened to earth, whether it is the `descent' alone that takes place and the members of the heavenly class come down to the level of the earthly class, or if it is possible the other way round too?

Is the `ascension' also sometimes possible in which the members of the downtrodden class attain the lofty heights of the ruling class? Perhaps, even if that were possible, they could hardly carry with them such gifts as may suit the heavenly ones.

Basically, it is meaningless to carry gifts from the earth to the heaven; but if one were blessed with the opportunity of ascension and were not merged into the heavenly class, he might return to earth, like Mr. Marx and Mr. Engels, with heavenly gifts for

.the earthly

Criticism of Historical Materialism

point

Now that we have dealt with the fundamentals and the conclusions of the theory of .historical materialism, the time has come to make a critical appraisal of it

First of all, I would like to point out that my aim is neither to criticize Marx's views scattered in all of his works, nor to appraise Marxism in its entirety. I only intend to evaluate his materialistic interpretation of history or historical materialism, which is one of the basic tenets of Marxism. Basically, the

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criticism of Marx's views or Marxism as a whole is a different thing from the criticism .of one of its elements such as historical materialism

The criticism of Marx's theories, i.e. the study of his views in totality based upon the entire bulk of his writings belonging to the different periods of his life, and which are full of many contradictions, is a work that has been done by several individuals in the West. In Iran, as far as I know, the book Revisionism from Marx to Mao, from which I have drawn abundantly and quoted extensively in this chapter, is the best book on (this topic.(۱

Our purpose here is criticism of historical materialism by analyzing one or more of the fundamental principles of Marxism which in Marx's own view were considered indubitable, and by critically examining one or more principles which Marx himself does not consider as definite, and has occasionally contradicted them in some of his works, but are nevertheless the necessary part of Marxism; since Marx's own .contradiction is to be regarded as a kind of deviation from Marxism

Here I have critically examined certain definite and generally accepted principles of Marxism and the conclusions which necessarily follow from them. Our purpose is not to point out all the occasions when Marx has expressed views contrary to his own

principles in his writings, which are replete with contradictions. The real target of my .criticism is historical materialism and not the theories of Marx in general

It is one of the

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This book was first written in French and then translated into Persian by the author, -۱ Dr. Anwar Khameh'i. He has exhibited profound scholarship in the treatment of the subject and praiseworthy capacity for evaluation and analysis of the problems involved. He himself has been once an ardent supporter and exponent of this school .for many years

wonders of history that in his philosophical, sociological, and economic writings Marx is more or less preoccupied with the idea of historical materialism, but while analysing and evaluating certain contemporary historical events, he pays little attention to the principles of historical materialism. Why does he do so? This question has been .answered variously

Furthermore, this attitude is not confined to this issue alone; on several problems of Marxism, Marx's attitude is one of self…contradiction. Theoretically or practically a sort of departure and deviation from Marxism in Marx himself can often be observed. .Accordingly, we have to find a comprehensive answer to this question

Some writers attribute this inconsistency to immaturity and shortcomings which he showed in different periods of his life. But this explanation is indefensible at least from the Marxist point of view; the major part of Marxism which is considered today as constituting the Marxist dogma is related to Marx's youth and the middle years of his life, and the most part of what are considered his deviations, including his analysis of .contemporary events, belongs to the later period of his life

Some other writers attribute this difference to his split personality. They claim that on the one hand he was a philosopher and an ideologue, which naturally requires of him to be inflexible in his dogmas, trying occasionally to interpret actual events, either by

hook or by crook, according to his own ideas. On the other hand, he had a scientific temperament and spirit, which always necessitates total acceptance

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.of reality and absence of adherence to any fixed dogma

Certain other writers make a distinction between Marx and Marxism. They consider Marx and his thinking as only a stage of Marxism. Marxism in itself is considered to be a school of thought in the process of development. There is nothing wrong if Marxism .left behind Marx in the course of its development

In other words, the view that the Marxism of Marx represents the primary stage of Marxism, does not violate the credibility of Marxism as a school. But this group does not explain what in their view which is the essence of Marxism. The main condition for the development of a school is that its basic principles should remain permanent; changes occurring only in secondary matters without affecting the basic principles; otherwise there would be no difference between total rejection and development of a .theory

If we do not consider the permanence of fundamental principles as a condition for its developmental process, then, why not pre…Marxian thinkers, Viz. Hegel, Saint Simon, Proudhon or any other thinker of this type, should be considered as stages in the evolution of this school? Why should not Marxism be regarded as a stage in the ?development of one of these schools

In my view, the cause of contradictions in Marx is due to the fact that he himself was lesser of a Marxist than the majority of Marxists. It is said that once in a gathering of ardent Marxists where Marx was trying to

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defend his position which contradicted his earlier position, he said: "I am not so much of a Marxist as you are." It is also said that in his later years Marx said: "I am Marx, not ".a Marxist

Marx's departure from Marxism in some of his views is because of the fact that Marx was too intelligent and ingenious to be a hundred percent Marxist. It needs some .measure of stupidity in order to be a staunch Marxist

Historical materialism, which is a part of Marxism and the subject of our present study, as explained earlier, consists of certain fundamentals and corollaries, which neither Marx the scholar could impose upon himself for ever, nor Marx could the philosopher and the thinker accept to be permanently saddled with. Now we propose .to critically evaluate this theory

Baselessness .۱

The first objection is that this view is not more than a mere `theory' without any proofs. A philosophical theory of history ought to be based upon observation of contemporary events and historical facts, and should be applicable to other times also. Either it should be formulated on the basis of historical evidence, being in addition applicable to events of the present and the future, or it should have been deduced and inferred from a priori premises based upon a series of scientific, .philosophical, and logical principles

The theory of historical materialism does not fulfil the conditions of any of the above mentioned methods. Neither the historical events of the times of Marx and Engels can be explained

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on its basis (as Engels himself has admitted. Engels says that he and Marx made a .mistake in emphasizing the importance of the economic factor in some of their works

But, he adds, they were saved from this error in case of their analysis of contemporary events where they were confronted with historical reality itself), nor the historical events that occurred during thousands of years of human history .confirm this theory

It is amazing to read the writings of some followers of Marxism who dogmatically try

to explain the past history in the light of historical materialism, and read their master's opinions into the pages of history, for instance in the book History of the Ancient world.(1)

2. Revision of Views by Its Founders

I have repeatedly mentioned that Marx terms economic foundation of society the `infrastructure; and other of its constituents as the `superstructure.' This interpretation is evidently enough to show one-sided dependence of all the other structures on the economic base.

Moreover, Marx explains in many of his writings quoted earlier, that the influence in this relationship is unilateral; i.e. the economic factors are always the influencing factors, while all other social modes are passively influenced. The economic factors act independently and other factors are dependent on them.

No matter in whatever way Marx interprets his basic thesis, his theories always affirm the priority of matter over soul, ,the priority of material needs over intellectual needs, the priority of human sociology over human psychology, and the priority of action over thought.

But Marx, in many of his

1- Publisher's note: here the author, Martyr Mutahhari, had left a blank space of several lines in the original manuscript to quote a passage from the book The History of the Ancient World, which was not accessible to the publishers.

writings, has raised another issue on the basis of dialectical logic, which may be regarded as a revision of his view and also a kind of departure from absolute historical materialism. That issue is related to the problem of reciprocal causation.

According to the principle of reciprocal causation, the cause...effect relationship should not be regarded as a one...sided process. If `A' is the cause of change in `B', in the

same way `B' also in its turn becomes the cause of `A'. According to this principle, there is a kind of reciprocal causal relation between all parts of nature and all parts of .society

For the time being I am not concerned here with the validity or invalidity of this dialectical principle interpreted in this form. But we may say that, according to this principle, the suggestion of priority of one thing over the other is meaningless with regard to causal relation between two things like matter and spirit, or action and .thought, or economic base and all other social institutions

Because if two things are interrelated and dependent upon each other for their existence, and the existence of one is conditioned by that of the other, the question as .to which is prior or fundamental, is meaningless

Marx, in some of his statements, considers all social processes, essential or nonessential, as based upon economic factors, and has not suggested the effect of .superstructure on the infrastructure, as referred to earlier

However, in some of his statements he accepts a reciprocal cause…and…effect

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relationship between the infrastructure and the superstructure, but maintains that the basic and ultimate role is played by the base. In the book Revisionism from Marx to Mao, two works of Marx, The Capital and The Critique of Political Economy, are compared. The author, while stating that in both the works Marx regards the :economic base as unilaterally determining the entire social structure, says

In spite of this, Marx, consciously or unconsciously, has added a new dimension to this definition by stating that superstructures, despite primacy of the base over (superstructures, can play an essential role in society. (۱

The author further asks: What is the difference between the predominant function or `determining role' that the economic infrastructure always plays and the `essential ?role' played by the superstructures

It means that if the superstructure occasionally plays the essential role, it becomes the main determining and governing factor. In such cases, it may even be said that what we call the superstructure is not a superstructure but is really the infrastructure .or the base, and what we call the infrastructure is the superstructure

:Engels, in a letter written in his later years to one Joseph Bloch, writes

According to the materialist conception of history, ultimately determining element in.... history is the production and reproduction of real life.(۲) More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a (meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.(۳

The economic

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.Anwar Khameh'i , op. cit., p. ۲۲۲ -۱

As the author says, Engels uses the phrase, “production and reproduction of real -۲ life,”... instead of “material 'and economic production,” in his book Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State. Engels says that production is dependent not only on the means of subsistence alone, but also on human reproduction. Implicitly, he does not consider the economy alone as the determining factor, but also believes in the role of such factors as sex and family. This is another deviation from the basic position .of historical materialism

”!Here the author adds in parenthesis: “revisionism, plain and simple -۳

situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure: political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas, also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements

in which, amid all the endless host of accidents the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.(۱)

Strangely enough, if the view that “the economic element is the only determining one” is a meaningless, abstract, and senseless phrase, this phrase has been uttered by no other person than Marx himself.

Moreover, if the elements of superstructure “in many cases preponderate in determining historical struggles,” it means that the determining and decisive element is not the economic one. After saying this, there is no need to believe that “the economic movement, amid all the host of accidents, asserts itself as necessary.”

It is more amazing that Engels, in the later part of the same letter, accepts that he himself and Marx may be held responsible for this mistake (or in his own words, twist). He says:

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is

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۱- Marx and Engels, Selected Works, vol. II, p. ۴۴۳.

due to it. We had to emphasize the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into light. (۱)

But some other people offer quite the opposite explanation of this excessive emphasis by Marx and Engels on the economic elements. They say, this overemphasis is not meant for their opponents in the other camp, but aimed at disarming the rival supporters of this view in their own camp.

In the book Revisionism from Marx to Mao, the author, after-pointing out that in the Critique of Political Economy Marx has emphasized the unilateral role of the economic factors more than in any other work-and I have already quoted the well-known

passage from the preface to that book…explains Marx's reasons for compiling the :Critique

Another cause of writing the Critique of Political Economy, was the publication of a book by Proudhon, Manuel du Speculateur de la Bourse, and another book by Darimon, the follower of Proudhon. When Marx saw that his rivals in the camp of Proudhon from one side, and the followers of Lassalle from the other side were relying upon the economic element in a reformative (not revolutionary) way, he endeavored to seize this weapon from their hands and used it for the purpose of revolution. This necessitated a rigidity suited to the purpose of popularizing his (beliefs.(۲

Mao has reinterpreted the, meanings of historical materialism and economic base according to

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Ibid., vol. II, p. ۴۴۴; Apology is worse than crime. In fact it is a kind of obstinacy and, -۱ ..at the very least, equivalent to sacrificing truth for the sake of personal interest

.Anwar Khameh'i , op. cit., p. ۲۱۹ -۲

the requirements of Chinese conditions. His new interpretation was aimed to explain .his own role as the leader of the Chinese Revolution also

His interpretation of historical materialism reaches a point that one finds this theory and its emphasis on the economic base, and as a consequence the so…called scientific socialism whose basis is historical materialism, reduced to mere play of words and .nothing else

Mao, in his treatise on contradiction, under the title, “The Principal Contradiction and :the Principal Aspect of Contradiction,” says

The principal and the non…principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves…. into each other and quality of a thing changes accordingly. In a certain process or at a

certain stage in the development of a contradiction, the principal aspect is A and the non…principal aspect is B, at another stage of development or in another process of development, the roles are reversed change determined by the extent of the increase or decrease in the strength with which each of the two aspects struggle against the (other in the development of a thing.(۱

:He further says

Some people think that this is not the case with certain contradictions. For example in the contradiction between productive forces and the relations of production, the productive forces are the principal aspect; … in the contradiction between the economic foundation arid its superstructure, the economic foundation is the principal aspect and there is no change in their respective positions. This is the view of .mechanistic materialism

True, the productive forces, practice, and the economic

۱- Mao Tse…Tung, Selected Works, "Four Philosophical Treatises," (London, Lawrence .and Wishart Ltd. ۱۹۵۴), vol. II, p. ۳۸

foundation generally manifest themselves in the principal and decisive roles; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But under certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory, and superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role; this must also be admitted. When the productive forces cannot be developed unless the relations of production are changed, the change in .the relations of production(۱) plays the principal and decisive role

As Lenin put it, without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. The creation and advocacy of the revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role…. When the superstructure (politics, culture and so on) hinders the development of economic foundation, political and cultural reforms become the principal and decisive factors. By saying this, are we running counter to materialism?

.No

The reason is that while we recognize that in the development of history as a whole it is the material essence of things that determines spiritual things, and social existence that determines social consciousness, at the same time we also recognize and must recognize the reaction of spiritual things and social consciousness on social existence, and the reaction of superstructure on economic foundation. This is not running counter to materialism; this is precisely avoiding mechanistic materialism and firmly (upholding dialectical materialism.(۲

Whatever Mao says contradicts historical materialism. When he says, "if the relations of production hinder development and progress of the productive force," or when he says "a revolutionary movement requires a revolutionary theory,"

۱- By the means of superstructural factors, such as military, political and educational ....

۲- Mao Tse…Tung, op. cit., pp. ۴۰…۴۱.

or when he says, "the superstructure hinders the development of economic foundation," he asserts something which can and should occur always.

But according to historical materialism, the development of the productive force necessarily transforms the relations of production, and revolutionary theory necessarily emerges spontaneously. As a result, the superstructure is necessarily transformed with change in the base.

But Marx has emphatically stated in his preface to the Critique of Political Economy:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production; or…what is but a legal expression for the same thing…with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces, these

relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution, with the change of economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less (rapidly transformed.(۱)

Such notions as the change in relations of production prior to the development of productive forces in order to pave the way for the progress of productive forces, the formulation of revolutionary theories prior to spontaneous birth of revolutionary ideas, the notion that transformation of superstructure transforms the base…all imply priority of thought over action and priority of spirit over matter. They imply the essentiality and independence of political and intellectual aspects with respect to the .economic aspect, and this contradicts historical materialism

Mao's statement that if the process of effect and action is accepted to be one…sided, dialectical materialism is negated

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.Andre Peter, op. cit,, p. ۲۴۳ -۱

is correct. But what is to be done if the basis of so…called scientific socialism rests upon this very principle of unilateral effect, and contradicts dialectical logic, i.e. the doctrine ?of unity of opposites, which is one of the laws of dialectics

We are forced to discard either the so…called scientific socialism and reject dialectical logic, or we have to uphold dialectical logic and reject `scientific' socialism and .historical materialism, upon which it is based

In addition to this, what does Mao mean when he says "… we recognize that in the development of history as a whole it is the material essence of things that determines spiritual things, and social existence that determines social consciousness"? Doesn't his own admission that superstructure can reciprocally act on the base, imply that sometimes productive forces determine relations of production and sometimes vice ?versa, .i.e. the process is reversed

Sometimes revolutionary movement produces revolutionary theories and sometimes vice versa? Sometimes politics, culture, power, religion, etc. are the factors responsible for bringing about a change in the economic foundation of society and sometimes the process is reversed? sometimes, it happens that material things decide spiritual matters and social existence determines social consciousness, and ?sometimes the process is quite reversed

Actually, Mao's statement that “the principal and non…principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other” is made to justify his Maoist viewpoint…which practically goes against Marxist historical materialism…not to explain .the Marxist theory of historical materialism, despite the claim that he does so

,Mao too

p: ۱۴۸

like Marx, has practically demonstrated that he is too intelligent to remain a Marxist forever. The Chinese Revolution under Mao's leadership practically violated scientific .socialism and historical materialism, and, consequently, Marxism

Under the leadership of Mao, China overthrew the feudal regime of old China by means of an agricultural revolution to establish a socialist regime in its place. Though according to the theory of scientific socialism and historical materialism a country that .is at the stage of feudalism should first pass through industrialization and capitalism

When industrialization reaches its climax, it can proceed towards the goal of socialism. According to historical materialism, as an embryo cannot pass through two stages within one leap, similarly a society also cannot enter into the final stage without passing through the intermediate successive stages. But Mao has practically demonstrated that he is one of those midwives who can bring forth a four…month old .embryo in healthy and sound condition

He has proved, contrary to Marx's claims, that all the factors which are regarded by him as elements of consciousness such as leadership, partisan training, political

organizations, revolutionary ideology, social awareness, which do not have concrete existence according to Marx and are regarded by him as part of the superstructure and not the base, can transform the relations of production to make a country an industrial one. In this way the Chinese Revolution has practically ignored the doctrines .of so…called scientific socialism

Mao has also contradicted the Marxist theory of history in another way. According to the

Marxist theory though the peasant class fulfils the first and the second conditions of being revolutionary, i.e. they belong to the exploited class and are without property, they cannot fulfill the third condition which demands unity, cooperation, mutual .understanding, and awareness of their own power

Hence the peasant class can never take any initiative for bringing about a revolution. The most they can is to participate in the revolution by following the revolutionary proletariat class in a semi…agricultural and semi…industrial society. Marx sometimes even calls them "the wretched who are reactionary by nature" and "completely)lacking in any type of revolutionary initiative.(۱)

In his letter to Engels, dealing with the uprising in Poland, Marx wrote about" peasants, "The wretched peasants, reactionary by nature… must not be called to struggle."(۲) But Mao created a revolutionary class out of the same wretched people who are advised not to be called to struggle. This very class overthrew the old regime .of China

According to Marx, peasants are not only incapable of leading ,a country toward socialism, but also they cannot participate in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The class that can lead a society in the transition from feudalism to capitalism arid has a revolutionary character at that historic moment is the bourgeois class, not the peasantry. But with the help of the same wretched class reactionary by nature, Mao made a historic leap by traversing two stages in one step, i.e. from

.feudalism to socialism

Hence Mao, with the kind of

.Anwar Khameh'i , op. cit., p. ۳۶۸ -۱

Ibid., p. ۳۴۸ -۲

departure he had to make from Marxism, was justified in raising the Maoist idea of `transformation of the principal and non…principal aspects of a contradiction into each '.other

Instead of proclaiming deviation from Marxism he pretends to follow Marxist theory of historical materialism and scientific socialism by offering a new scholarly .interpretation

Mao learnt the lesson from his trusted predecessor, Lenin, that a Marxist necessarily deviates in practice from Marxism." Before Mao, Lenin brought about a revolution in Russia which was then still a semi-industrial state and founded a socialist state for the .first time

Lenin realized that he could not hope to live to wait patiently for the Czarist Russia to become fully industrialized and to wait for capitalism and exploitation of workers to reach the ultimate stage so that a spontaneous revolution may occur with a dynamic and conscious movement of its own. He saw that he could not wait for the mother to .complete her period of pregnancy

Accordingly, he started from the superstructure and made full use of such things as party politics, revolutionary ideology, the war, and armed struggle, and converted the semi…industrial Russia of those days into the Soviet Socialist Republic of today. Lenin practically realized the meaning of the proverb: a bird in the hand is worth two in the .bush

:Contradiction of Necessary Correspondence between Base and Superstructure .۳

According to the theory of historical materialism there is always a sort of correspondence between superstructure and base in societies, to the extent that one can identify the base by means of the superstructure and one

p: ۱۵۱

.can know the superstructure by knowing the base

Whenever the base is changed, the correspondence between the base and the superstructure is affected, disturbing the social equilibrium and giving rise to crisis, followed sooner or later by a necessary deterioration of the superstructure. And if the base remains in its original state, the superstructure also necessarily remains .permanent and unchanged

Contemporary historical events have practically disproved this Marxian thesis. Taking into consideration a series of economic crises from ۱۸۲۷ to ۱۸۴۷ accompanied with a series of social and political revolutions, Marx and Engels concluded that the social .revolutions were necessary and inevitable consequences of economic crises

:But, in the words of the author of Rivisionism from Marx to Mao

It is the irony of history that there has not been any economic crisis accompanied with a revolution in industrialized countries since ۱۸۴۸. In the very lifetime of Marx before his death four times forces of production rebelled against relations of production without bringing about any revolution... later, some economists like Joseph Schumpeter have gone to the extent of naming these crises caused by technical innovation as `gales of creative destruction,' and as safety valves for reestablishing .economic equilibrium and economic growth

Countries like England, Germany, France, and America have made great industrial advancement taking capitalism to its peak; but contrary to Marx's prophecy that these countries would be the first and foremost to experience the workers' revolution and to be converted into socialist states, they have not changed politically, legally, religiously or in other

aspects which are termed as constituents of superstructure. The baby whose birth Marx was awaiting has not been delivered despite the lapse of more than ninety .years, and there is little hope of it in the future

Of course, these regimes shall sooner or later be overthrown, but the revolution that is expected can never be the revolution brought about by the working class and the Marxist theory of history shall not be realized. The regimes of so…called socialist countries of today shall also be overthrown, and would not remain as they are now. .But the future regime will certainly be not a capitalist one

On the other hand the countries of East Europe, Asia, and South America have become socialist despite the fact that they have not yet attained the stage of giving birth to a socialist state. We see that there are certain countries quite similar in respect to the (economic) base, but different from one another regarding their .superstructure

Two superpowers, U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., are the best example of this phenomenon. America and Japan also have the same type of economic regime (capitalistic) but with regard to such aspects as politics, religion, morality, etiquette, manners, and art they .are quite different

In the same way certain countries having similar superstructure, i.e. political regime, religion, etc., are different in respect of economic base. All these cases conclusively prove that the notion of necessary correspondence between superstructure and base .as upheld by historical materialism is nothing but a mere illusion

Nonconformity of Ideological and Class Bases .۴

As

stated earlier, according to the theory of historical materialism, the superstructure

cannot precede the base at any point of history. On the basis of this doctrine the consciousness of every epoch is necessarily associated with that age. With the lapse of every particular period, the corresponding consciousness also expires. Ideas, philosophies, plans, predictions, religions…all are by…products of needs of a certain .period and cannot be applicable to those of other periods

But practical evidence goes against this hypothesis. There are a number of philosophies, personalities, ideas and outlooks…leave alone religions and religious ideologies…which are ahead of their times and their own class interest. There are many ideas that were the products of the material needs of a specific period which still remain alive even after the passage of a considerable time, and shine as stars .over the horizons of human history

What is striking is that in this regard, too, Marx in some of his statements departs :from Marxism. In German Ideology, he says

Consciousness sometimes is seen to precede the contemporary empirical relations, to the extent that it is possible to find the evidence for the conflicts of a later age in the (writings of theoreticians of the preceding age.(۱

Independence of Cultural Developments .۵

According to the theory of historical materialism, cultural and scientific temperament of a society like all the other aspects, viz. political, legal, and religious, is related to its economic mode. It cannot develop in independence from economic development. The development of science follows the development in the means of production and the

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.Ibid., p. ۱۷۳ -۱

.economic base of society

First. of all, it should be noted that the means of production are not capable of developing automatically without human intervention. The means of production

develop in the context of man's relationship with nature and his curiosity, .inventiveness, and endeavor

The development in the means of production is accompanied by the growth of science and technology. But the question arises as to which of them comes first: Whether man first invents something and then utilizes it in practice, bringing industry into existence, or if industry comes into existence and then man tends to invent something. It cannot .be denied that the second alternative is correct

It is evident that the discovery of scientific laws and technological methods is made as a result of human inquisitiveness and experimentation. Without contact with nature, inquiry, research, and experimentation, man can neither discover any scientific law .nor perfect any technique

No one can challenge this view. The question arises only with regard to the priority of man's inquisitiveness, experimentation and growth of his scientific knowledge over tools of technology: whether man first develops his scientific knowledge and then externalizes his knowledge to invent technological tools or vice versa? The validity of .the first part of the statement cannot be doubted

Moreover, it is to be noted that meaning of expressions such as `evolution' and `growth' is literal in the context of human beings, and figurative in the context of technological and productive implements. `Evolution' and `growth' are literal in the case of a

.real entity which passes from a lower to a higher stage

The use of `evolution' in the figurative sense applies to an objective entity which does not go through actual evolutionary stages, but which becomes either non…existent or .obsolete and is replaced by another entity which is different from it

In the process of the growth of a child, for example, the development is real. Now, taking another example, if a teacher teaching a class is replaced by another more

qualified and competent, in this case to say that the level of instruction has improved '.and developed, is a figurative application of the word `development

In fact the human progress in manufacture of production tools is a real progress. It is man who develops and progresses intellectually; but the term industrial progress is used in a figurative sense, when what is meant is that every year a more sophisticated, improved, and better equipped model of an automobile comes into the .market

In this type of development there is no objective entity that rises from a lower to a higher stage. The automobile of the last year has not become more developed and .perfect, but is discarded and becomes obsolete, and a new automobile takes its place

In other words, in this kind of development, a deficient individual or object becomes obsolete and is replaced by another which is better and improved; not that the same individual has attained perfection in the course of time. Wherever real development and figurative development take place

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side by side, it is quite obvious that the real development is to be considered the .principal development and the figurative development is secondary

Moreover what we have said applies only to technical knowledge and know…how. In other sciences like medicine, psychology, sociology, logic, philosophy, and mathematics, there is not even the possibility of such a unilateral correlation. Progress in these sciences depends to the same extent or more or less upon the material and economic conditions as the material and economic conditions depend :upon the growth of sciences. K. Schmoller, in his refutation of Marxism says

No doubt, the material and economic conditions are essential for the attainment of higher culture, but to the same extent it is also undoubtedly true that intellectual and (moral development follows an independent course.(۱

If we ignore a defect in August Comte's point of view which confines man and

humanity to the mind, which is only a part of human faculties and only half of the essence of man, his theory regarding social development is far more valuable than :that of Marx. August Comte claims

Social phenomena are subject to a strict determinism which operates in the form of an inevitable evolution of human societies...an evolution which is itself governed by the (progress of the human mind.(۲

۶. Historical Materialism Contradicts Itself

According to historical materialism, all thought, all philosophical and scientific theories, and all ethical systems represent certain material and economic conditions, and are inseparably connected with their own specific objective conditions. Hence their value ,and validity are not absolute

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۱- Ibid., p. ۲۳۹.
۲- Raymond Aron, op. cit., vol. I, p. ۷۸.

.but dependent upon a specific period

With the lapse of a particular period and changes in the material, economic, and social conditions, which are necessary and inevitable, every idea or thought, every philosophical or scientific theory or ethical system is invalidated and is ultimately .bound to be replaced by a different idea, thought or theory

According to this principle, historical materialism, too, is subject to this universal law. Because if it is not subject to this universal law and is an exception, it would mean that there are some scientific and philosophical laws which are fundamental and independent of any kind of economic base; and if historical materialism is subject to the general law, its value and validity are confined to one period and it is applicable to that period alone which has given rise to it. It is not relevant to an earlier or later .period. Thus, in both cases, historical materialism is contradicted by itself

It means that historical materialism as a theory, as a philosophical point of view or as a part of superstructure, either applies to itself or it doesn't. If it does not apply to itself, it contradicts itself. If it is governed by itself, it is valid for a limited period only; it .cannot be applied to other periods from which it excludes itself

This objection is also valid in the case of dialectical materialism, which considers the principle of dialectical movement and the principle of unity of opposites applicable to the whole reality including

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.scientific and philosophical laws

In the Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism (Vol I, II) I have dealt with these problems. But it is clear that the claim that the universe is the playground of the forces of dialectical materialism and society that of historical materialism is absolutely .baseless

Certain other objections are also valid against historical materialism. For the time being we refrain from mentioning them. But I cannot conceal my amazement as to how such a baseless and unscientific theory could become famous as a scientific !theory. The art of propaganda is indeed capable of working wonders

Islam and Historical Materialism

point

Does Islam accept the theory of historical materialism? Is the Qur’anic logic based on historical materialism regarding the interpretation and analysis of historical events? There is a group of people who claim that historical materialism was forwarded by the Qur’an at least one thousand years before Marx. Dr. 'Ali al-Wardi, a Shi'ite scholar of Iraq and author of several controversial books including the one entitled Manzilat al-'aql al-bashari, ("The Place of Human Intellect"), is most probably the first to raise this issue. It has become a fashion among a group of contemporary Muslim writers to analyse history in Islamic phraseology from this point of view, which is considered a

.mark of being an intellectual

But in our view those who think in this way either do not correctly understand Islam or historical materialism or both. A general review of the five fundamental principles of historical materialism and the six

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conclusions discussed earlier is sufficient to tell anyone well acquainted with the logic of Islam that the logic of Islam and historical materialism are radically opposed to .each other

In view of the fact that this approach to the study of society and history-especially when it is tinged with Islamic colour and bears the stamp of Islamic acceptability for enhancing its authority and worth-is a grave danger for the thought and teachings of Islam, I consider it essential to investigate and analyse the problems which may otherwise lead to the misunderstanding that Islam considers economy as the basis of .society and regards history as being materialistic in essence

I would also like to remind that I have here discussed these issues in a more comprehensive manner than put forward by the proponents of this view themselves. The advocates of this view pick up two or three verses from the Qur'an or a few traditions of the Prophet (S) in support of certain points. I have dealt not only with their arguments, but also with those problems which they have not touched at all, but which, in my opinion, can be raised by them, thus making the whole discussion inclusive and comprehensive. Following are the arguments of those who imagine that .the Qur'an believes in historical materialism

۱. The Qur'an has put forward various social notions, and I have already quoted about fifty sociological terms from the Qur'an while discussing sociology. The study of the verses having sociological implications, where these terms occur, may

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lead one to infer that from the Qur'anic viewpoint societies are in a 'sense bipolar, i.e.,

they are divided into two classes. On the one hand, the Qur’an points out a kind of polarization of society on the basis of material conditions, i.e., on the basis of .prosperity and deprivation of its people

The Qur’an refers to one class by such names as, mala' (ruling clique). mustahbirun (the arrogant, oppressors, tyrants), musrifiin (the extravagant, the wasteful), mutrafiin (the affluent), and refers to the other class by such names as mustad'afun (the oppressed, the weaken and deprived), nas (mankind, masses), dhurriyyah (the insignificant, the unnoteworthy-as opposed to the mala '), aradhil or ardhalin (the vilest, the lowest).(١) The Qur’an regards them as two opposite poles. On the other .hand, the Qur’an puts forward the notion of bipolarity of society in spiritual terms

On the on~ side are the kafirun (infidels), the mushrikun (idolaters, polytheists], the munafiqun (hypocrites), the fasiqun (the corrupt), and the mufsidin (mischief mongers), and on the other side are the mu 'minun (the believers), the muwahhidun (monotheists), the muttaqun (the pious, the God-fearing), the salihun (the virtuous), the muslihun (correctors, reformers)the mujahidun (the warriors), and the shuhada .((the witnesses, the martyrs

If we study and analyse the material and spiritual polarities in/the context of the Qur’anic verses, we shall observe a kind of correspondence between the first material pole and the first spiritual pole and also between the second material pole and the second spiritual pole. That is, the

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.Raymond Aron, op. cit., vol. I, p. ٧٨ -١

kafirun (infidels), the mushrikun (idolaters), the fasiqun (the corrupt), and the mufsidun (corrupters) are the same people who are called the mala’ (the ruling clique), the mustakbirun (the tyrants), the musrifun (the prodigal), the mutrafun (the .affluent) and the taghuti ones

They neither form a separate group nor draw other people into their fold to form a

composite group. The mu’minun (the believers) the muwahhidun (the monotheists), the salihun (the virtuous), and the mujahidun (the warriors) are the same people as the mustad’afun (the oppressed), the fuqara (the poor), the masakin (the wretched), the slaves, and the deprived. This pole does neither consist of a separate group nor is a combination of various other groups or persons. It means that society is not .composed of more than two poles

The opulent, the oppressors, and the exploiters, who are also the disbelievers are on one side and the oppressed, who are also the believers, are on the other side. It is quite obvious that the division of society into oppressors and oppressed is responsible for giving rise to two groups at level of faith viz., the disbelievers and the believers. Oppression is the essential condition accompanying polytheism, disbelief, hypocrisy, inequity, and corruption; being oppressed is the condition accompanying belief, .monotheism, virtue, goodness, and piety

In order to be sure of the meaning of this correspondence, it is enough to study the verses of Surat al-'A'raf beginning from the verse ۵۹ لقد أرسلنا نوحاً الى قومه.. (We sent Noah unto his people...) till

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the end of the verse ۱۳۷, و دمرنا ما كان يصنع فرعون و قومه و ما كانوا يعرشون (... We annihilated all Pharaoh and' his folk had done and that they had contrived.). In these forty verses, the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Shu'ayb and Moses are narrated. In all these stories (with the exception of the story of Lot) it may be observed that the class that followed the prophets was the oppressed class (mustad’af), and the class that arose in revolt .(and negated them was the ruling class (mala') of the tyrants (mustakbirun

This correspondence is explained by nothing except class consciousness, which is the requisite condition as well as the result of historical materialism. Thus according to the Qur’an the conflict between belief and disbelief reflects the corresponding struggle of .the oppressed and the exploited against the oppressors and the exploiters

The Qur’an clearly considers ghina (i.e. ownership, property and wealth) to be the

source of man's rebellion, against God i.e., the riches are contrary to the values of modesty, humility, and submission–the virtues to which the prophets called the :people

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَيَطْغَىٰ (۶) أَن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَىٰ (۷)

(Verily man is rebellious when he thinketh himself wealthy {and contented]. (۹۶:۶,۷

Again we see that, in order to show the evil of property and ownership, the Qur’an narrates the story of Korah. Korah was not an Egyptian, but belonged to the tribe of Israel. He was one of Moses' people, the same oppressed people whom Pharaoh was exploiting. However this man belonging

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to an oppressed people, after becoming wealthy, started exploiting his own fellow :sufferers and rebelled against Moses. The Qur’an says

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِن قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ فَبَغَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ

(Now Korah was of Moses' folk, but he rebelled against them .... (۲۸:۷۶

Does it not show that the stand of the prophets against rebellion is actually the stand against the haves, the rich, and their wealth? The Qur’an 'has disclosed in some of its verses that the real adversaries of the prophets were the affluent class, the mutrafin: those who were immersed in the good things of life, being the pampered of history In Surah Saba’, verse ۳۴, this view is developed in the form of a general principle and a :universal law

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِی قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ

And We have sent not unto any township a warner, but its pampered ones (the (mutrafun] declared, 'Lo: We are disbelievers in that which you bring unto us.' (۳۴:۳۴

All. this indicates that the confrontation of the prophets with their adversaries and the struggle between faith and infidelity reflect the hostility between two social classes:

.the oppressed and the oppressors

The Qur’an calls Its addressees ‘nas’ (mankind). 'Nas' means the deprived and .۲ underprivileged masses. This indicates that the Qur’an acknowledges the concept of class consciousness, and considers the deprived masses as the only class capable of responding to Islam's invitation. This also indicates that Islamic ideology is class-oriented and it means that Islam is the religion of the oppressed and

underprivileged masses. The addresses of Islamic ideology are the underprivileged masses alone. This provides another basis for inferring that Islam regards economy .as base and approves of the materialist conception of history

The Qur’an makes clear that leaders, reformers (muslihun), warriors in the way of.۳ God (mujahidun), martyrs (shuhada)' and ultimately the prophets, the apostles of God, arise from among the masses and not from the affluent, the wealthy, and the .:pampered class Regarding the Prophet of Islam (S), the Qur’an says

هُوَ الَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ

(He it is Who has sent among the illiterate (ummiyyu) a messenger of their own .... (۶۲.۲

The ummah (the religious community) is none other than the underprivileged masses. :Similarly, the Qur’an declares about the martyrs in the way of God

وَنَزَعْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ

And We shall raise from every nation {the same deprived masses] a shahid (martyr) . (and We shall say, 'Bring your proof forward ... .: (i.e . your martyr;) (۲۸:۷۵

The fact that leaders of revolutions and reform movements necessarily arise from the deprived masses also implies that there is a necessary correspondence between social and religious origin on the one hand and economic and class origin on the other. This necessary relation cannot be interpreted except on the basis of the materialist .conception of history and on the basis of assumption that economy is the real base

The prime target of the mission of the prophets and their social movement is the .۴ .base not the superstructure

It is inferred from the Qur’an that the mission and the message of the prophets aimed at establishing justice and equity by implementing social equality and obliterating class distinctions and divisions. The prophets have always started their mission from the base and later on brought changes in the superstructure, not the other way round. The superstructures, i.e. doctrines of faith, dogmas, moral and behavioural reforms, always occupied a secondary place in prophetic missions, as they were :attacked only after the base was transformed. The Prophet (S) said

من لا معاش له لا معاد له

One who does not have a means of- subsistence does not have Hereafter either .((which is a product of spiritual life

This statement indicates the priority of the means of subsistence over the Hereafter, and the priority of material existence over spiritual existence. If stretched to its logical conclusion, it means that spiritual life is synonymous with superstructure and is based :upon material conditions of human life. The Prophet (S) also said

اللهم بارك لنا فى الخبز، لولا الخبز ما تصدقنا و لا صلينا

My God, bless our bread with abundance; for had it not been for bread we would not .have been charitable, nor would we have offered prayers

This statement also indicates the dependence of the spiritual superstructure upon the .material base

Nowadays, majority of people tend to believe that the prophets had set before them the task of reforming only the superstructure; that is they aimed at making men true believers and were interested only in the reform of their

beliefs, morals, and behaviour; they were not concerned with changing the foundation, or at the most they considered matters related with the base or economic activity merely secondary in importance. It is imagined that the prophets thought that once the people became true believers all the matters would automatically be set right; justice and equality would be established and the exploiters would come up on .their own to surrender their privileges to the exploited and the oppressed

To be short, it is believed that the prophets have used faith and belief as the weapon for attaining their goals, and their followers should follow the same path. This is nothing but deception and an illusion that the priests and clergymen associated with the class of oppressors and exploiters have invented and imposed on the society in .order to render the teachings of the prophets ineffective and futile

In the words of Marx, "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of intellectual production .... The material rulers are the intellectual rulers of the society arid rule over the social mind (as well." (۱

The approach and the method of work of the prophets were quite opposite to the view generally accepted by the majority of people. The prophets first delivered society from the evils of social polytheism social discrimination, injustice, repression, and exploitation which are the root causes of ideological polytheism, and moral, behavioural, and religious perversions. After socially emancipating the people they engrained

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Also refer to ۱۸:۲۸, describing the followers of the prophets; ۱۱:۲۷ and ۲۶:۱۱۱ - ۱ describing the followers of Noah; ۱۰:۸۳ describing the followers of Moses; ۷:۸۸-۹۰ describing the followers of Shu’ayb; ۷:۷۵-۷۶ describing the followers of Salih, etc. There are many more verses of the kind, but we confine here to refer to the above-.mentioned

in their souls the faith in the unity of God (tawhid), and taught them the methods of

.attaining moral and behavioural piety

The Qur’an holds that the logic of the opponents of the prophets has always been .۵ opposed to the logic of the prophets and their followers throughout the entire course of history. The Qur’an explicitly explains that the Ideology of the opponents has been always conservative, obscurantist, traditional, and backward-looking, whereas the Ideology advocated by the prophets and their followers has been necessarily .dynamic, anti-traditional, progressive, and futuristic

The Qur’an clearly propounds the view that the first group practised the same ideology which according to sociological analysis is practised in a society divided into two classes of exploiters and exploited by the class of exploiters, who are the beneficiaries of the existing system and advocate the ideology of status quo. The prophets and their followers on the other hand followed and practised the ideology which sociologically speaking, is employed by the sufferers and deprived in human .history

There are frequent references in the Qur’an to the specific logic held by the opponents and the followers of the prophets, indicating what sort of philosophy these two groups followed. They are actually meant for pointing out that these two types of philosophies, like the two groups themselves, have always been opposed to each other. The Qur’an, by pointing out the logic of the opponents and that of the followers .of the prophets, provides us with a criterion for today

The Qur’an pictures several scenes

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in which these two ideologies confront each other. Those who are interested may study the following Qur’anic verses. Surat al-Zukhruf, verses (۴۰-۵۰); Surat al-Mu 'min, verses (۲۳-۴۴); Surat Taha, verses from ۴۹ to ۷۱; Surat al-Shu 'ara, verses from ۱۶ to ۴۹: Surat al-Qasas, verses from ۳۶ to ۳۹. Here, for the sake of example, we quote verses from ۲۰ to ۲۴ from Surat al Zuhhruf with some brief explanatory remarks about their :meanings

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُم مَّا لَهُم بِذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ (٢٠)أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُم بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ (٢١) بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٢٢) وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ (٢٣) قَالَ أَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكُم بِأَهْدَىٰ مِمَّا وَجَدتُّمْ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَكُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٢٤)

And they say: 'If the Beneficent had so willed, we should not have worshipped them (the angels). (Now that we worship them, it means that it is the will of God-absolute determinism). They have no knowledge of whatsoever of that; they are only conjecturing (about the matter of determinism). Or have We given them any Scripture before (this Qur'an) to which they hold' (i.e. it is nothing of these two. neither a sound .(faith in determinism nor any Scripture which could serve as evidence

Nay, for they say only 'We found our fathers following a religion, and we are guided by their footprints. ' And even so We sent not a warner before thee

into any township, except that men who lived at ease (mutrafun) said, 'We indeed found our fathers following a religion, and we are following their footprints. (And the warner) said: 'What! even though I bring you better guidance than that you found your fathers following? [i.e. although the path shown by me is more in accordance with correct logic?] They answered, 'We disbelieve in that you were sent with.' (۴٣:٢٠-٢۴)

We see that the opponents of the prophets sometimes utilize the idea of fatalism and predestination to impress upon people that we are not free to act according to our will. This idea, as sociologists point out, always suits the interests of the beneficiaries of the status quo, who do not want any change in the existing conditions and, therefore, take shelter in the doctrine of predestination as an excuse. Sometimes they lay emphasis upon following the traditions of ancestors and consider the past as something sacred and worthy of imitation. Everything related with the past is accepted as right and correct, and is considered sufficient for guidance. This is the .logic preached by the champions of status quo and vested interests

In opposition to this view, the prophets never supported traditionalism and fatalism. They upheld logic, knowledge, and emancipation, which represent the approach of the revolutionaries and the sufferers under the status quo. The adversaries, when they see that they cannot win the battle due to their weak logic and arguments, as a last resort, declare that whether we believe in

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fatalism or not. whether we respect tradition or reject it, we are against your message, your mission, and your ideology, because your message contradicts the .present social reality and class structure

The most obvious aspect of the Qur’anic teaching is its siding with the oppressed. .۶ The Qur’an promises, in accordance with the prophecy of historical materialism on the basis of dialectical logic, that in the struggle between the oppressed and the .oppressors the final victory is on the side of the oppressed

The Qur’an through this alignment really affirms the necessary course which history is determined to follow, because according to it the class which IS revolutionary in character ultimately emerges victorious in its struggle against the class which is reactionary and conservative due to its class situation, and is destined to inherit and :rule the earth

وَنُرِيدُ أَن نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِى الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to (make them leaders and to make them the inheritors. (۲۸:۵

:Similarly the verse ۱۳۷ in Sural al- 'A 'raj declares

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِى بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِى إِسْرَائِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ

And We caused the people who were oppressed to inherit the eastern parts of the land and its western parts, thereof which We had blessed. And the fair Word of the

Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of their endurance; and

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We annihilated all that Pharaoh and his folk had done and that they had contrived. ((۷.۱۳۷

This view of the Qur’an, that history moves in the direction of the victory of the oppressed, the exploited, and the enslaved, fully corresponds to I ill: principle derived from historical materialism, according to which reaction .md conservatism are the characteristics of exploitation which are opposed to till: law of evolution, and are, therefore, bound to face extinction. The essential character of the exploited is enlightenment, dynamism, and I evolutionary spirit, which being in harmony and .agreement with the law of evolution are bound to be victorious

Here it would not be inappropriate to quote a passage from an article lately published by a group of so-called Muslim intellectuals who have left intellectualism behind to embrace Marxism. There, under the above-quoted Qur’anic verse, the following :explanatory remarks are made

What is greatly remarkable is the position of God and all the phenomena of ... existence with respect to the world's oppressed. It cannot be denied that the oppressed of the earth according to the Qur’anic teachings, are the underprivileged, enslaved masses, who are forced not to play any role in determining their own fate ... If we pay attention to this fact, taking into consideration the absolute will of God governing the course of being and all the phenomena of life, which tend to favour the oppressed, the question arises: Who are the persons that are instrumental in realization of the Divine Will? The answer to this

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.question is quite obvious

When we evaluate the administrative organizations of societies as two poles of the oppressors and the oppressed, with the knowledge that the Divine Will can be

translated into action, on the one hand, by bestowing the inheritance and leadership of the earth upon the oppressed, and on the other by destroying the institutions of exploitation and ultimately negating them, we find that the oppressed themselves and their apostles and committed intellectuals, who arise from within the oppressed .class, act as the agents of the Divine Will in realizing this end

In other words, they are these chosen apostles(۱) and the departed martyrs from among the oppressed(۲) who make the initial moves in the struggle against destructive taghuti regimes, moves which pave the road for establishing the .leadership of the oppressed and enabling them to inherit the resources of the earth

This view, in fact, represents our understanding of the Qur'anic interpretation of historical upheavals and the monotheistic revolutions in the sense that in the same way as monotheistic revolutions,(۳) from a sociological point of view, revolve around the axis of the leadership of the oppressed and their inheritance of the earth, so also the leaders and the groups in the vanguard of this rnovement should necessarily arise .from among the oppressed

Their ideological and social views should also be derived from the intellectual attitude .and social alignment of the oppressed and exploited masses

.There are several implications of this statement

a. From the viewpoint of the Qur'an, society is

۱- Karl Marx, German Ideology

۲- In the footnote, the verses ۶۲:۲ and ۲:۱۲۹ are referred to, to draw the conclusion that the prophets arise from among the "ummahs," and the word "ummah" is taken to .mean "the underprivileged masses." We shall examine this argument later on

۳- In the footnote, the verse ۲۸:۷۵ has been referred to, and it is presumed that it means that the martyrs and those slain in the way of God always arise from among the "ummahs," and the word "ummah" is taken to mean "the underprivileged masses."

.We shall examine this argument later on

bipolar and is always divided into two classes representing the oppressors and the .oppressed

b. The will of God (according to the expression used in the article, 'the position of God and all phenomena of existence') with respect to the leadership and inheritance of the oppressed and the downtrodden is universal and applies without any discrimination whatsoever to believers and non-believers, monotheists and polytheists. It means .that the relative pronoun (...) is used in a general sense applicable to all people

The Divine promise guarantees the victory of the oppressed qua oppressed over the oppressors. In other words, the main conflict going on throughout history up to this date is between the exploited and the tyrants. The purpose of the evolution of the universe dictates that the downtrodden should emerge victorious against the .oppressors

c. The will of God is executed through the means of the oppressed. The leaders, guides, apostles and martyrs necessarily arise from among the oppressed; not from .the other side

d. The ideological base is always in harmony and correspondence with the social base . and class character

Thus we see how certain Marxist principles regarding history are derived and inferred from the Qur'anic verse, and how it is claimed that the Qur'an, one thousand and two hundred years before Marx came into the world anticipated and echoed his thought !and philosophy

Well' now that such a view about history has been found in the Qur'an what conclusions can be drawn in its light while analysing contemporary history? These gentlemen have

hastily tried to draw conclusions from this so-called .Qur'anic principle, applying it as a test to the contemporary movement of the 'ulama'. They say that the Qur'an has taught us that the leaders and guides of revolutions should necessarily be from the .class of the oppressed

On the contrary, nowadays we see that the 'ulama' who represent one of the three dimensions of the system of exploitation throughout history, have shifted their social ?base and have become revolutionary. How is this phenomenon to be explained

The solution is simple. We can surely and with certainty conclude that there is an intrigue involved in this affair. When the ruling class finds itself in trouble, it asks the allied clergy to arrange a revolutionary pageant to manage its own escape. This is another conclusion derived from this Marxist-excuse me, Islamic-view. It is quite .clear who will pocket the profits yielded by such interpretations

Criticism

All that has been said about the justification of historical materialism from the Qur'anic viewpoint may be regarded as being either basically wrong, or if correct the inference drawn from it is totally wrong. We have to critically examine the arguments .given above

١. The claim that the Qur'an has divided society materially and spiritually into two classes and that these two classes coincide with each other, is absolutely false. To say that according to the Qur'an the group consisting of the kafirun (unbelievers), the mushrikun (idolaters), the munafiqun (hypocrites), the mufsidun (mischief mongers), is the same as that of the

mala' (ruling clique), the mustakbirun (١) (arrogant, oppressors) and the jabbarun (tyrants), on the one hand, and on the other hand the group consisting of the mu'minun (believers), the muwahhidun (monotheists), the salihun: (righteous), the shuhada' (martyrs) is the same as the oppressed and the exploited class, and to say that the confrontation between the believers and the unbelievers reflects the basic

conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors respectively, is not correct. This type of coincidence is not at all validated by the Qur'an. On the contrary we find that the Qur'an affirms the absence of such a coincidence.

In its treatment of the lessons of history the Qur'an cites the examples of believers who belonged to a tyrannical ruling class yet revolted against that class and its values. The believer of the family of pharaoh whose story is narrated in Surat al-Mu'min is an example of such individuals. The Qur'an also mentions Pharaoh's wife, who, in spite of being his life partner and equally sharing his luxurious life style, was a true believer in God.(۲)

The Qur'an, in several places, in a moving style recalls the story of Pharaoh's magicians, and shows how the natural truth-seeking conscience of man, when faced with the truth, can rise on occasion against falsehood and error, setting aside all personal interests and ignoring with contempt Pharaoh's threats:

لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

"I shall assuredly cui off alternately your hands and feet then I shall crucify you all together." (۷: ۱۲۴)

Basically, the revolt

۱- The Qur'an itself does not use these detracting words, but quotes the ruling clique which uses them to refer to the followers of the prophets belonging to the oppressed classes.

۲- These gentlemen, without expressing their real intention of presenting historical materialism of Marx in an Islamic guise, pretend to have reinterpreted the Holy Qur'an.

of Moses (A) as related by the Qur'an, contradicts historical materialism. It is true that Moses belonged to the tribe of Israel – he was neither an Egyptian nor a kinsman of

the Pharaoh - but Moses was brought up since Infancy like a prince in Pharaoh's household. The same Moses who was brought up by Pharaoh revolted against the tyrannical system of his patron, a system in the midst of which he had grown up, renouncing him and preferring to work as a shepherd for the old man of Medina, until .he was chosen by God for prophethood when he formally confronted Pharaoh

The Holy Prophet (S) was orphaned in childhood and led a life of poverty until his youth. It was after his marriage with Khadijah that he became prosperous and rich. :The Qur’an refers to this point when it says

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ (۶) وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ (۷)وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ (۸)

Did He not find thee an orphan; and shelter thee? Did He not find thee needy, and (suffice thee? (۹۳:۶,۸

It was in this period of prosperity that the Prophet (S) devoted his time to prayer and contemplation in solitude. According to the doctrine of historical materialism, during this period the Prophet (S) should have changed and assumed the role of a conservative advocate of the status quo. But it was during th.is period that he started to propagate his revolutionary message, rising in rebellion against the capitalists, the usurers, and the slavers of Mecca, and revolted against the practice of idolatry

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.which symbolized the corrupt life of those days

As all the believers, the monotheists, and the monotheistic revolutionaries did not arise from the oppressed class, the prophets also absorbed the good-natured and the relatively untainted natures from among the oppressor classes and aroused them to revolt against themselves (by way of repentance) or against the interests of their own class (by way of revolution). In the same way, all the oppressed people did not belong .to the ranks of the believers and the monotheistic revolutionaries

The Qur’an pictures numerous scenes where the people belonging to the oppressed class are counted among unbelievers and included among the doomed subject to

(Divine chastisernent.(١

Therefore, neither all believers belong to the oppressed class nor all oppressed are believers. The claim that there is complete correspondence between them is absolutely absurd. Undeniably, the majority of the followers of the prophets have belonged to the oppressed class, or at least came from those whose hands were not stained with blood and repression. Similarly the majority of the opponents of the prophets belonged to the class of oppressors.

This is so because although the human nature which accepts the Divine message is common to both classes and exists in everyone, but the oppressors, the affluent, and the extravagant confront a great barrier because their souls are polluted and their habits are deeply entrenched in the evil existing system. There are few out of this class who are capable of freeing themselves from under the mountain load of these

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١- The Qur'an, ۶۶:١١.

evils. But the oppressed class has no such restraints.

Their nature not only responds readily to the Divine call, but they see in it the opportunity to recover their lost rights. Identifying themselves with believers has a double advantage for them. It is on this account that the majority of the followers of the prophets consist of the oppressed and individuals of the opposite group among the believers form only a minority. Despite it the notion that the group of believer and the class of the oppressed are one and the same is totally groundless.

There is an acute difference between the fundamental principles regarding the nature of history laid down in the Qur'an and the basic doctrines of historical materialism. In view of the Qur'an, the spirit is a fundamental reality, and matter in no way is prior to the spirit. The spiritual needs and urges are fundamental to human existence and are not dependent on the material needs. Thought is also independent of action and the psychological nature of man precedes the social makeup of his

.personality

The Qur’an, since it believes in the fundamental nature of the human being, a nature which is found even within extremely dehumanized persons like Pharaoh, who is a natural human being whose growth has been arrested, it also admits even for the most corrupt persons the possibility, however weak, of moving towards truth and self-realization. Accordingly the prophets were encharged to admonish the tyrant in the first place and perchance to liberate the

p: ١٧٩

natural man imprisoned within the oppressor, arousing his inherent humanity against his evil social personality. We know that success was achieved in a great number of .cases, and what is called "repentance" is the name of this phenomenon

Moses (A) at the initial stage of his prophethood, was entrusted with the task of persuading Pharaoh and awakening in him the true human nature by means of admonition. He was advised to fight against him only if he failed in this attempt. In Moses' view Pharaoh had internally captivated and fettered the man within himself, and enslaved and imprisoned other human beings externally. Moses first attempts to arouse the man imprisoned within Pharaoh to revolt against himself. He endeavours to arouse the remnants of humanity left in him against his social personality, i.e. the :Pharaoh forged and fabricated by perverse social conditions

اذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ (١٧) فَقُلْ هَل لَّكَ إِلَىٰ أَن تَزَكَّىٰ (١٨) وَأَهْدِيَكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ (١٩) فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ (٢٠)

Go to Pharaoh, he has waxed insolent. And say, ‘Hast thou the will to purify thyself, (and that I should guide thee to thy Lord, then thou shalt fear?’ (٧٩:١٧-١٩

The Qur’an believes in the power and value of guidance, advice, admonition, reminder, argumentation and logical reasoning (in Qur’anic terminology, hikmah, wisdom). According to the Qur’an these devices can change a man, alter his course of life, transform his personality, and bring about a spiritual change in him. This approach is contrary to Marxism and materialism, which restrict the role of guidance

'to merely transforming the 'class-in-itself

into the 'class-for-itself' by bringing about consciousness of class antagonism and .realization of class character

It is claimed that the addresses of the Qur'an are nas (mankind, people), and nas as .٢ a term is synonymous with the deprived masses. Hence Islam addresses itself to the oppressed class, and Islamic ideology is the ideology of the oppresses class; therefore, Islam recruits its followers and warriors exclusively from the .underprivileged masses

This whole line of argument is wrong. Of course the addressees of the Islamic message are nas, i.e. human beings, which include the whole mankind. No dictionary of Arabic language gives the meaning of the word nas as the underprivileged or oppressed masses, and this word does not refer to any particular class of men. The :Qur'an says

وَلِلّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلاً ..

It is the duty of all men towards God to come to the House as pilgrims; whoever can... (afford to make his way there...(٣:٩٧

O," ,يا ايها الناس Does this verse refer to the underprivileged masses only? The phrase mankind!" which repeatedly occurs in the Qur'an, nowhere refers exclusively to the underprivileged masses but to all mankind in general. The universality of the Qur'anic address is also derived from the principle of universality of human nature propounded .in the Qur'an

It is said that the Qur'an claims that the leaders, the guides, the prophets, and the .٣ martyrs arise exclusively from among the oppressed. This is yet another mistake regarding the Qur'an. The

.Qur’an never makes such a statement

that messengers of God arise هو الذی بعث فی الامیین...The argument concerning verse ۶۲:۲ from among the ummah (community) and the ummah is equivalent to the oppressed ummiyyin) is actually the plural form of the word) أميين masses, is ridiculous. The word أم is derived from أُمِّی (ummi) which means a person who is unlettered. Furthermore is a society which is أُمَّه ummah). Morever, the meaning of the word) أمَّه umm) not from) .composed of different groups and occasionally different classes

By no means can it be used to signify the ‘underprivileged masses.’ Still more :ridiculous is the argument regarding the verse ۷۵ from Surat al-Qasas about martyrs They have interpreted it (or rather distorted it) to و نزعنا من کل امه شهیداً فقلنا هاتوا برهانکم. mean this: “We shall raise from every ummah (the masses) a shahid (martyr in the way of God); i.e. We shall make him a revolutionary, then We shall ask every ummah to produce its proof, which is the same as its martyr – the revolutionary killed in the ”.way of God

Firstly, this verse follows another verse and both of them are related to the Day of Judgmenet, the day when God would address idolaters. The preceding verse is as :follows

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ

Upon the day when He shall call unto them. and he shall say, 'Where are now those (whom you claimed to be My associates?' (۲۸: ۷۴

naza’na) means that “We shall separate,” or) نزعنا ,Secondly

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”.We shall draw near.” It does not mean “We shall raise” or “We arouse“

shahid) is not used here in the sense of martyr but in the sense) شهيد Thirdly, the word .of witness – witness to the actions of his people

The Qur’an considers every prophet as a witness to the actions of his ummah

shahid) is) شهيد (people). There is not a single instance in the Qur'an where the word شهيد used for martyr as it is currently today, for one killed in the way at God. The word was of course used by the Prophet (S) and the Imams (A) in this sense, but not in the Qur'an. Thus we see how the verses of the Qur'an have been distorted for the purpose of reconciling the Qur'anic teachings with an inconsistent philosophy like ,Marxism

What was the principal aim of the prophets? Was their primary goal to establish .۴ justice and equality, or to strengthen the relation of man with God by means of faith and knowledge? Did they combine both the alms together and were dualist in approach? Do we require some other explanation? I have already dealt with this problem while discussing prophethood(۱) and there is no need to repeat what we have said there. Here we shall deal with this subject only from the viewpoint of the .prophets' methodology

While discussing the practical implications of tawhid(۲) (the principle of Divine Unity), I have already explained that the prophets neither concentrated their efforts on reforming man

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See verses ۴:۹۷, ۱۴:۲۱, ۳۴:۳۱-۳۷, ۴۰:۴۷-۵۰ -۱

See Wahy wa nubuwwat (Revelation and Prophethood), the third book of the - ۲ series, Muqaddameh bar jahan bini-ye Islami, of which the present book Jami'e wa .tarikh is a part, pp. ۳۵, ۳۷-۴۳

and liberating him from within by breaking off all bondages to the worldly things-as the Sufis maintain-nor did they devote all their energies to bringing about equity and reform in external human relations, considering this reform as sufficient for the reformation of man's internal relations (with God and himself)- as advocated by some materialist schools of philosophy. The Holy Qur'an, in the same breath and in a single :sentence says

... تَعَالَوْاْ إِلَى كَلَمَةٍ سَوَاء بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلاَّ نَعْبُدَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَلاَ نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضاً أَرْبَاباً مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ ...

Come now to a word common between us and you, that we shall worship none but... God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall lake (others for lords besides God ... (۳:۶۴

But the question is, from where did the prophets start their mission? From within or from without? Did the prophets initiate their work by transforming men from within by means of impregnating them with religious faith and spiritual fervour and after that people had undergone religious, moral, intellectual, and emotional transformation they made use of this change for attaining the aims of social unity, social reform, ?social justice and equality

Or did they act other way round by first concentrating their efforts to change material conditions by calling public attention to deprivation, backwardness, and oppression and by mobilizing the people to eliminate social disunity, discrimination and injustice, and attending to the task of cultivating faith, correct doctrine and

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?morals only after this goal was realized

A little study of the methods employed by the prophets and saints would reveal that they, contrary to the practice of so-called social reformers and the advocates of human welfare, started their work with emphasis on right thinking, correct doctrine, belief, spiritual fervour, love of God, and constant remembrance of the origin of the .world (mabda') and the Day of Resurrection

A glance at the chronological order of the surahs and revelation of the Qur'anic verses with reference to the problems discussed in them and a study of the life of the Prophet (S) and his approach to the problems he dealt with during the thirteen years of his stay in Mecca and the ten years of his life in Medina, is sufficient to throw light .on the methods employed by the prophets

That the opponents of the prophets should have maintained a conservative logic is .۵ quite natural. If it could be deduced from the Qur'an that the opponents of the

prophets, without exception, believed in this logic, one might justifiably say that all opponents of prophets belonged to the affluent, privileged, and exploiter class. But what can actually be deduced from the Qur’an is that this type of thinking is the logic of the leaders of the opponents, the mala' and the mustakbirun, whom Marx regards .as owners and distributors of the society's intellectual products

That the logic of the prophets should be a logic of dynamism, rationality, and indifference to custom and tradition

is also natural. But It is not justifiable to say that deprivation, exploitation, and oppression of the lower classes have been responsible for moulding their conscious… ness in this manner, and that their thinking is naturally determined by their .deprivations and privations

The prophets have this logic because they have attained to a stage of human perfection with respect to their logic, reason, feelings, and emotions. In fact, the more a human being acquires perfection, the lesser is his attachment and dependence on his natural and social environment and material conditions, and greater is his independence. We shall talk more about it later. The independent logic of the prophets requires that they should not be tied to customs, habits, and traditions. On the contrary it requires of them to liberate the people also from the shackles of blind .imitation of decadent customs and traditions

Whatever has been said in the context of oppression (istid’af) is also unacceptable. .۶ Why? Because, firstly, the Qur’an has itself clearly explained the evolutionary course of history and its ultimate goal variously in several verses. These verses explain and interpret the meaning of the above-mentioned verse (۲۸:۵) and are complementary to it, as they suggest that its contention is true only under certain conditions. Secondly, contrary to the common belief, the verse of istid’af (۲۸:۵) cannot be interpreted as .formulating any universal law in itself

This is so evident that there is little need for any elaborate comparison with other

related verses or any detailed interpretation or

explanation. This verse is related to the verse preceding it and the one following it. When these verses are read in successive order we find that this verse does not contain the universal principle which has been inferred from it. I would like to discuss this verse in two parts. The first part of our discussion is based upon the assumption that this verse may be separated from the ten verses preceding and following it and .that a universal principle may be derived from it

Then we compare this verse with other verses which propound another historical principle which contradicts the assumed principle, and see what conclusion can be drawn from this comparison. In the second part we shall show that this verse basically .does not propound the universal' historical principle that has been inferred from it

(i)

In several verses of the Qur’an the ultimate destiny and fate of history as well as its course of evolution is pictured as the ultimate victory of faith over faithlessness, victory of piety over uncontained lust, the victory of righteousness over corruption, and victory of good and godly conduct over perverse behaviour. The verse ۵۵ of Surat :al-Nur, reads thus

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُم فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْناً يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئاً

God has promised those of you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed in the earth, even

as He caused those who were before them to succeed [others}, and that He will surely establish tor them their religion which He has approved (or them, and will give them in exchange safety after their tear. They shall sense Me, not associating with Me

(anything .... (۲۴:۵۵

In this verse the people who are promised final victory viceregency of God, and inheritance of the earth are no doubt the righteous believers. Contrary to verse ۲۸:۵ which mentions the condition of being oppressed, deprived, and exploited as the main characteristic of the believers, this verse relies upon ideological, moral and behavioural characteristics. It proclaims the ultimate victory and' domination of a .particular kind of belief, faith, and mode of behaviour

In other words this verse promises the ultimate victory of the human being who has attained conviction of faith, realization of truth and sublimity of character. One of the implications of the promised victory is 'succession in earth,' that is, wresting of authority from previous rulers and powers. The other implication is regarding the establishment of the rule of Religion, that is realization of all ethical and social values of Islam, such as, justice, chastity, piety, courage, self-sacrifice, love, worship of God, sincerity, purity of soul, etc. Thirdly, it implies rejection of all forms of polytheism .((shirk) either in worship ('ibadah) or in obedience ('ita'ah

:In Surat al-'A'raf the verse ۱۲۸ states

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللّهِ وَاصْبِرُواْ إِنَّ الأَرْضَ لِلّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

,And Moses said to his people

p: ۱۸۸

Seek help in Allah, and be patient; surely the earth is God's and He gives it for an' inheritance to whom He Will of His servants and ultimately to the God-fearing, [i.e. in (the end the God-fearing would be the inheritors of the earth] (۷:۱۲۸

:In Surat al-'Anbiya, the verse ۱۰۵ declares

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِن بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

We have written in al-Zabur, after the Remembrance, 'Indeed the earth shall be the (inheritance of My righteous servants.' (۲۱:۱۰۵

.There are other verses also relating to this subject

What shall we do now? Should we accept the verse ۲۸:۵ related with istid’af (oppression) or the verse ۲۴:۵۵ concerned with the matter of istikhlaf (succession) and several other verses of its kind? Can we say that these two types of verses though apparently different in meaning express the same fact, that the oppressed are the same as the believers, the righteous, and the pious, and vice versa? Can we say that istid’af (being oppressed) is the social and class character of the same people who are .ideologically identified as men of faith, righteousness, and piety? Of course

As I have already argued, the theory of correspondence between the so-called ‘superstructural’ characteristics of belief, righteousness, and piety, and the so-called ‘infrastructural’ characters of being oppressed, exploited, and deprived is not justified from the point of view of the Qur’an. Form the Qur’anic viewpoint it is just as possible that a group of oppressed may not consist of believers. The Qur’an has

.introduced both of these groups

However, as I have pointed out earlier, whenever a monotheistic ideology based upon the Divine values of justice, self-sacrifice, and benevolence is presented in a class society, it is evident that majority of its followers should belong to the oppressed class; because they do not have to overcome the obstacles which block the way of nature as in the case of the opposite class. But it does not necessarily mean that the .class of believers is exclusively comprised of the oppressed class

Secondly, each one of the above-mentioned verses presents two different mechanisms of history. The verse concerning oppression (۲۸:۵) identifies the course and movement of history with class struggle. The mechanism of movement is explained as being due to the pressures created by the oppressors and their reactionary character on the one hand, and the revolutionary spirit of the exploited .class on the other hand

This struggle undeniably results in the victory of the oppressed class, irrespective of their commitment to the Qur’anic ideal of good conduct, and applies also to such peoples, for example, as that of Vietnam and Cambodia. If we try to interpret this verse from the religious point of view, we shall have to say that this verse expounds :the principle of the Divine support for the oppressed. The Qur’an declares

وَلاَ تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّهَ غَافِلاً عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ

(And deem not that God is unaware of what the wicked do .... (۱۴:۴۲

This is an affirmation of Divine justice. The verse concerned with

p: ۱۹۰

istid'taf (oppression) containing the notions of leadership (imamah) and inheritance .(wirathah) is indicative of Divine justice

But the verse relating to istikhlaf (succession) (۲۴: ۵۵) and other similar verses, expound a different mechanism operating in history as a natural process. From the religious point of view this mechanism implies a principle more comprehensive and .inclusive than the principle of Divine justice, since the latter is included in it

The mechanism expounded in the verse ۲۴: ۵۵, and other similar verses, can be explained in this fashion: Among the various kinds of struggles throughout the course of world's history, almost all of which have had waged for the sake of some material interest and gain, only that struggle which has been waged for the sake of God (lillah wa fillah) has been exclusively motivated by sacred values, free of any selfish material interest. This struggle, under the leadership of the prophets and the believers following them, has been instrumental in the advancement of humanity and human .civilization

Only this type of struggle is worthy of being called the battle between good and evil. It were these battles which pushed forward history from the humanistic and spiritual point of view. The real motivating force behind these struggles was not the upsurge of a certain class but man's natural and instinctive urge for truth and understanding of

the mystery of existence and his craving for justice, which aims at creating an ideal .social order

It was not the sense of deprivation and loss but the natural

.urge for self-perfection that had been instrumental in man's progress

The animal faculties in man have remained unchanged from the beginning of history until now; they have neither developed in any way nor can they develop now. But his human aptitudes gradually develop and blossom, so that in future, more than today, he will be able to emancipate himself from material and economic bonds and incline more and more towards faith and spiritual perfection. The ground on which history has developed and evolved was not the battles fought for class interests and material gains, but the ideological and spiritual struggles based on Divine faith. This is the natural mechanism of man's evolution which ensures the ultimate victory of the .righteous, the pious, and the warriors of the Divine path

Let us discuss the Divine view of this victory. Whatever participates in the process of history and undergoes gradual evolution, attaining its ultimate goal as history approaches its culmination point, is manifestation of God's Lordship (rububivvah.) and Benevolence (rahmah), which necessitate that creatures attain perfection. It is something more than what is is called Divine justice which necessitates only 'compensation.' In other words, what has been promised is issuance and manifestation of the Divine Attributes of Lordship, Benevolence, and Bountifulness, .[and His His Attributes of Omnipotence and Vengeance [retribution

Thus, we see that the verse ۲۸:۵ concerning istid'af and the verse concerning istikhlaf (and other verses similar to it), each has a specific logic of its own. They differ in import with respect to

the perspective of history, the class which is victorious, the course followed by history

to ensure the promised victory, the mechanism or the natural process responsible for the movement of history, and with respect to the manifestation of relevant Divine .Attributes

Nevertheless, we see that the verse ۲۴:۵۵ concerned with succession is more comprehensive than the other one in respect of the conclusions it yields. Whatever man obtains on the basis of the verse concerning oppression is only a part of what he attains on the basis of the verse concerning succession. The moral value we derive from the verse concerning oppression is deliverance of the oppressed from the tyranny of the oppressor, which implies that God is the Saviour of the oppressed (thus highlights only one attribute of God), whereas the verse concerning succession .embraces all the Attributes of God, including the one designated by the former

(ii)

Now the second part of our discussion regarding the verse concerning oppression. The fact is that this verse is not meant to lay down any universal principle. It consequently, neither describes the course of history nor indicates the mechanism of history for the ultimate victory of the oppressed qua oppressed. The erroneous pre... sumption that this verse lays down a principle is caused by separating it from its preceding and succeeding verses and generalizing the meaning of the relative pronoun الـذين in the phrase الذين استضـعفوا to deduce a principle which conflicts with the .one deduced from the verse ۲۴: ۵۵ concerning succession

p: ۱۹۳

:Consider the following three verses

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعاً يَسْتَضْعِفُ طَائِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ {۴} وَنُرِيدُ أَن نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ {۵} وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِي فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ {۶{

Indeed Pharaoh exalted himself in the earth and made its people into castes, Abasing one party of them, slaughtering their sons and sparing their women, surely he was of

those who work corruption, And we desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them leaders and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the earth, and to show. Pharaoh and Haman (his prime (minister) and their hosts that which the) feared from them, (۲۸:۴-۶

.These three verses are interrelated and can be interpreted only when read together

We see that the clauses وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِى الْأَرْضِ ...'and to establish them in the earth,' and' وَنُرِى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ ...'and to show Pharaoh and Haman...' in the third verse are related to the phrase أَن نَّمُنَّ,'that We shall favour,' in the second verse which is complementary to their meaning. Therefore, these two verses cannot be separated from each other.

Besides, the content of the second clause in the third verse, i.e. وَنُرِى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ is related to the content of the first verse, and makes an assertion -about the fate of Pharaoh whose tyranny is described in the first verse. Thus we cannot separate the third verse from

the first verse, as the third verse is related to the second verse and complements it. ,The second verse, also, cannot be separated from the first verse

Had the third verse not been there or had it not dealt with the fate of Pharaoh and Haman, it would have been possible to separate the second verse from the first, and to consider it as independent, so that a universal principle could be deduced from it. But the inseparable connection of these three verses absolutely excludes the possibility of deducing any principle. What is meant is that Pharaoh indulged in acts of self-aggrandizement, discrimination, repression and infanticide, while God had determined to bestow leadership and inheritance of the earth upon those who were humiliated, oppressed, and deprived of their rights. Hence the pronoun الذين in the second verse should be taken in the restricted sense of reference to the people who were promised, not in a general sense applicable to all oppressed.

Moreover, there is another point in the verse to be noted. The phrase و نجعلهم ائمه 'We

that We shall favour...' It ' ,أن نمـن shall make them as leaders...' refers to the phrase which would have been more proper if it was meant that the بإن نجعلهم does not say .Divine favour involved amounted to bestowing of leadership and inheritance

This is the general interpretation of the verse. However, the verse means to say, 'We intended to show favour unto the oppressed through a prophet and a revealed Scripture (Moses

p: ۱۹۵

and the Torah), through religious teaching and training, and through generation of monotheistic faith in them, making them righteous believers, and as a result the leaders and inheritors of the land [their own land]. Hence the verse intends to make :this statement

وَنُرِيدُ أَن نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ (بموسى والكتاب الذى ننزله على موسى) وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed (by sending Moses and ...the revealed Scripture) and to make them leaders and inheritors

Therefore, though the verse ۲۸:۵ concerning oppression (istid'af) bears a specific meaning, it is quite similar in import to the verse ۲۴:۵۵ concerning succession (istikhlaf), i.e. it partially conveys the general meaning of the verse. Furthermore, aside from the basically we cannot presume that the ,و نجعلهـم ائمه with أن نمـن relation of the phrase verse intends to say that the children of Israel would have obtained the leadership and inheritance of their land by sole virtue of being oppressed whether Moses would have appeared as a prophet or not, irrespective of his heavenly teachings and ,regardless of their following those heavenly teachings

Possibly, the advocates of justifiability of the theory of historical materialism from the Islamic point of view may raise another point. They may say that the Islamic culture in its essence and character is either the culture of the oppressed or of the oppressors, or it is a blanket culture. If the Islamic culture is the culture of the oppressed, it is bound to have the character

of its class: its audience, its message, its alignment, and everything must revolve around the oppressed class. And if the Islamic culture is the culture of the oppressors, as claimed by the opponents of Islam, besides having its class character and revolving around its interests, it should be a reactionary and anti-human culture and so .necessarily of a non-Divine origin

No Muslim would accept this point of view. Moreover, the entirety of this culture bears witness to the contrary. Now the claim that the Islamic culture is a blanket culture. A blanket culture is a neutral culture, a culture of isolation and indifference, without responsibility, and commitment, whose motto is, "Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give back to God what belongs to God." It is a culture which attempts to reconcile water with fire, oppressed with oppressor, exploited with exploiter, by bringing together all of them under the same roof, a culture that neither roasts the .meat nor hums the spit

Such a culture is practically a conservative culture which serves the interests of the oppressors and the exploiters. A neutral, indifferent, and noncommitted group, which does not participate in any social conflicts between the exploiter and the exploited, practically supports the exploiting class by not constraining its freedom. Similarly a culture whose spirit is neutral and indifferent should of necessity considered to be the culture of the oppressive class. Taking this into account, it is claimed that since the Islamic culture is neither neutral nor a

supporter of the oppressive class, it should be a culture of the oppressed with respect to its origin, its alignment, its message, and its audience, all revolving around the axis .of this class

This argument is totally fallacious. I think, there are two fundamental reasons for the inclination of this section of Muslim intellectuals towards historical materialism. Firstly, they presume that if Islamic culture is to be regarded as a revolutionary culture--or if

Islam is to be equipped with a revolutionary culture--the recourse to historical materialism is inevitable. The rest of their talk and their claims that it is an idea inspired by the Qur'an and specifically derived from the verse ۲۸:۵ about istid'af are nothing but excuses and devices to conceal this prejudgement. This is the reason for their outright depa'rture from the essence of Islamic logic, which makes them degrade the sublime, natural, Divine and human logic of Islam to the level of a .materialistic philosophy

These intellectuals have imagined that the only way open for a culture to be revolutionary is to identify it with the oppressed and the deprived class, to consider it bound to its interests, and as being exclusively related to it with respect to its source, alignment, and audience. Therefore, they think, all leaders and ideologues should arise solely from this class, the relation of this culture to all the other classes and .groups being one of sheer hostility, antagonism, and conflict

These intellectuals presume that the way to a revolutionary culture should necessarily end in

the stomach, and that all great revolutions of history, even those led by the prophets, were the revolutions of the stomach, for the stomach. For the same reason, out of the great Abu Dharr, the wise man of the urnrnah, a staunch monotheist, a sincere and honest supporter of Islam, a determined warrior in the way of God, a man who fearlessly fulfilled the duty of al-amr bi-al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar, they have carved an Abu Dharr of the stomach, a psychopath remarkably sensitive to the pangs of hunger, who, for the sake of satisfying his hunger, considered in not only .permissible but obligatory to draw the sword against all men

The highest value attributed to his life, in their view, is his personal experience of hunger, due to which he could understand the agony of the hunger class. His sympathy with the hungry caused him to develop a complex against those who were fighting against them. That's all there is to Abu Dharr. The whole personality of this Luqman of the ummah, this monotheist see, this ardent crusader, and one of the

.greatest personalities of Islam, is degraded to the level of a materialist

These intellectuals subscribe to the view of Marx according to whom a revolution can (originate only in a violent movement of the masses.(١

They are unable to imagine that a culture, a school of thought and an ideology which has Divine origin and addresses all human beings, and III fact I he human nature ,itself

p: ١٩٩

Jahan bini ye tawhidi (The World Outlook of Tawhid), the second treatise of the - ١ .Muqaddameh'I bar jahan-e Islami, pp. ۶٢-٨١

through a universal and comprehensive message, aligned with the values of justice, equality, piety, spirituality, love, benevolence and struggle against tyranny, is ever capable of giving birth to a great revolution accompanied with profound changes. But it is a revolution guided by the Divine light and the human conscience, and is accompanied with religious fervour, spiritual ecstasy, Divine motives, and humanistic values, similar to those monotheistic revolutions which have been witnessed by history again and again. The Islamic Revolution is a clear example of such a .revolution

These intellectuals fail to conceive that it is not essential for a culture to necessarily originate in the oppressed class in order to be committed and purposive and not to be neutral and indifferent. They presume that a blanket culture is necessarily neutral and indifferent. They are unable to understand that it is impossible for a comprehensive school of thought and a blanket culture to be neutral, indifferent irresponsible, and .noncommittal if it has a Divine origin and is addressed to the human nature

That which creates the sense of responsibility and commitment is not affinity with the oppressed class but dedication to God and human conscience. Ignorance of this fact is the root cause of their misunderstanding regarding the relationship of Islam with .revolution

The other main reason for this misconception should be sought in the relationship between Islam and its social alignment. These intellectuals have observed that there is a clear inclination in favour of the oppressed in the Qur’an reflected in

p: ۲۰۰

its historical discourses about the movements led by the prophets. On the other hand, they have accepted with unquestioning credulity the validity of the Marxist doctrine of correspondence between the social base and ideological base, according to which the origin and alignment of an ideology correspond with each other.

Since it has never crossed their minds to question the validity of this doctrine, they have been forced to draw this inference that since the Qur’an clearly considers the goals of the sacred movements to be in alignment with the interests of the oppressed and oriented towards recovery of their rights, therefore, it means that the Qur’an regards all the sacred movements as originating from the oppressed and exploited class. This leads to the conclusion that the essence of history from the Qur’anic viewpoint is materialistic and economic, with economy as the base of the social structure.

From what we have said so far it becomes clear that the Qur’an believes in the principle of human nature and considers it to be the logic which governs human life. This logic, which may be called the 'logic of the human nature,' is diametrically opposed to the 'logic of profit,' which is the logic of the beastly and degenerate human being.

Accordingly Islam does not accept the doctrine of correspondence between the social origin and alignment of an ideology or the doctrine of correspondence between the social and ideological bases. Islam regards it as an inhuman doctrine applicable to semi-human beings who have not

p: ۲۰۱

received any human education or training, and so are devoid of any sense of higher

values. Such stick to the logic of profit only. But it does not apply to human beings who have attained humanhood, having received human education and training; their logic is the logic of nature.

Aside from all this, to say that the alignment of Islam is in favour of the oppressed is a sort of loose statement. Of course, Islam is aligned with the values of equity, equality, and justice. Obviously the people who are benefited by this alignment are the oppressed and the deprived. Those who are adversely affected by it are the oppressors, the exploiters, and the despots.

It means that Islam, even while striving for the rights of a certain class, its principal goal is realization of a value and promotion of a human principle. It is here that the extraordinary worth of 'the principle of nature,' clearly expounded by the Qur'an, becomes evident in the Islamic culture as the fountain-head of all Islamic teachings.(۱)

Much that is said about nature [in other philosophies] fails to elucidate its depth and to comprehend its full dimensions. Even those who often talk about nature, since they do not pay due attention to the various aspects of its vast dimensions, ultimately come up with views which contradict this principle.

Another example of this error, which is more appalling, is the theory regarding the origin of religions. Whatever we have discussed till now concerns the nature and origin of historical

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۱- Andre Peter, Marx and Marxism, Persian translation by Shuja' al-Din Diyaiyan, p. ۳۹.

phenomenon from the viewpoint of religion (particularly Islam). Now we shall deal with religion as a socio-historical phenomenon, which has existed from the dawn of history up to the present time, and concerns with the origin and alignment of this social phenomenon.

We have recurringly pointed out that the Marxist doctrine of historical materialism believes in a correspondence between the origin of every cultural phenomenon and its class alignment. There is a universal principle generally believed in by Muslim mystics and philosophers, according to which the end of everything is a kind of return .to its origin

النهایات هی الرجوع الی البدایات

.The ends return to the origins

:And Rumi has said

جزئها را رویها سوی کل است بلبلانرا عشق با روی کل است

آنجه از دریا به دریا می رود از همانجا کامد آنجا می رود

از سرِ کُه سیلهای تیزرو وزتنِ ما جانِ عشق آمیزرو

,The parts are forced towards the whole

;Nightingales are in love with the rose's face

,What comes from the sea flows back into it

;And everything returns to its source

,Like the restless waves gushing from mountain-tops

.My soul burning with love, is restless to be free from the body

Marxism holds a similar view with regard to intellectual, aesthetic, philosophical, and religious matters, and in fact all socio-cultural phenomena. This school claims that all ideas are directed towards the source from which they originate. The end of everything is directed towards its source and origin. There is no such thing as a neutral or non-aligned philosophy, religion or culture. There

is also no such thing as a philosophy or religion which seeks social reform that is not .wholly to the benefit of the social class from which it arises

According to it, every class has its specific intellectual and cultural manifestations. Therefore, in all societies divided into two classes from the economic point of view, there are two distinct types of emotional, philosophical, moral, artistic, literary, aesthetic approaches, and two different types of sensibilities and world outlooks, and occasionally even two types of scientific knowledge. Whenever the infrastructure and property relations are of two forms, this division leads to bifurcation in two cultural .and intellectual patterns and systems

Marx personally accepts two exemptions from this principle: religion and the State. According to him, these two are special creations of the oppressive class and are used by it as instruments of exploitation. Naturally, they are aligned with the interests of the oppressors. As for the exploited class, due to its social position it is neither the source of religion nor the State. Religion and the State are imposed upon them by the .opposite group. Hence two systems of government or religion do not exist anywhere

Certain Muslim intellectuals, contrary to Marx's view claim that religion can be also divided into two different systems. As morality, arts, literature and all other cultural phenomena in a class society represent two systems and each of them has a specific origin and orientation related to its respective class-one system is related to the ruling class while

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the other is related to the ruled -so also religion is of two types: the religion of the .rulers, and the religion of the ruled

The religion of the rulers is polytheism (shirk), and the religion of the ruled is monotheism (tawhid). The religion of the rulers is partisan and discriminatory, whereas the religion of the ruled advocates equity and equality. The religion of the rulers justifies the status quo, while the religion of the ruled demands revolution and condemns the status quo. The religion of the rulers is static and stagnant, and silences

all criticism; whereas the religion of the ruled stimulates upsurge, dynamism, and protest. The religion of the rulers is the opium of the society, and the religion of the ruled is a tonic for it.

Therefore, Marx's theory, that the social orientation and alignment of religion is absolutely to the interests of the rulers, is true only for the religion of the ruling class, which is against the ruled and is the opium of the masses. This is the type of religion which has practically always existed and has been in vogue and power. But it is not true of the religion of the ruled, i.e., the religion- of the truthful prophets, which was not tolerated by the ruling class and was suppressed by all means.

These intellectua۱s in this manner reject Marx's theory which considers all religions as an instrument employed in the interests of the ruling class, and presu.me that thereby they have rejected Marxism itself. They

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do not realize that what they have said, in spite of its going against the views of Marx, Engels, Mao, and other Marxists, is nothing but a confirmation of the materialist-marxist interpretation of religion – something which is far more appalling. After all they accept that the religion of the ruled has a particular class origin.

Thus they approve of the principle of correspondence between a religion's class origin and its class orientation and alignment. In others words, they have unconsciously affirmed the materialistic conception of religion and all cultural phenomena and hence the doctrine of necessary correspondence between the origin of a cultural phenomenon and its objectives. The only thing they have done is that contrary to the Marxist views, they have affirmed the existence of a religion which originates in the oppressed class and serves its interests. They have given an interesting explanation of the religion of the oppressed and its social orientation. But they ignore that this view in itself accepts the doctrine of materialist-economic character of religion.

Furthermore what sort of conclusions are drawn from this view? It is concluded that the polytheistic religion of the ruling class is the only religion that has played an

objectively significant role in the lives of people throughout history. Due to the determinism of history, which supported it, and the economic and political power vested in its hands, the religion of the ruling class, which necessarily justified its situation, has been always the predominant religion. On the other hand,

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since the monotheistic religion could not materialize and objectify its social objectives, it did not play any historical role in society, as the superstructure can not precede the economic base or infrastructure.

According to this view, the monotheistic movements of the prophets, being the expression of the aspirations of the oppressed and the defeated, could not play any historical role and were bound to be defeated, The prophets preached the religion of unity of God and justice, but all their attempts proved to be short-lived, because the religion of the rulers under the mask of monotheism and prophetic teachings distorted the true religion and suppressed It. The religion of the ruling class flourished by drawing its nourishment from prophetic teachings while growing in power and using it for exploitation of the deprived class.

In fact, the truthful prophets of God strove to provide the people with bread, but brought disaster upon them, as their religion became a tool of the opposite class for tightening the noose further around the neck of the oppressed and the weak. The prophets could not achieve what they desired through their teachings; rather the outcome was contrary to their objectives, or, to use an expression used by Islamic jurisprudents, مـا قُصِـدَ لـم يقـعُ ومـا وقـعَ لـم يُقصـد, 'the intended did not happen, and what happened was not intended."

What the materialists and atheists say about religion, that religion, that opium of the masses, it stupefies them, bewitches them, causes stagnation and passivism, justifies tyranny and discrimination, and

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is conducive to ignorance-all this is true but only for the religion of the rulers: the polytheistic religion of social discrimination which predominated throughout history. But it is not true of righteous religion, the religion of monotheism, the religion of the ruled, the oppressed, which was always suppressed and was driven out of the arena .of life and history

The only role played by the religion of the ruled has been one of criticism and protest. It was similar to the role of a political party with minority seats in the legislature. The party which obtains majority forms the cabinet out of its members, carries out its programmes and resolutions. The other party despite being more progressive, .because of being in minority, is reduced to the role of a critic of the majority

The party in majority does not pay any heed to these criticisms. Ruling the society according to its own desires, it may occasionally even utilize the criticism of the minority for strengthening its own position. If it were not for the criticism of the opposition, it may possibly collapse under increasing pressures; but the criticism of .the opposition makes it more cautious and helps it to further consolidate its position

The foregoing statement is not true on any account. Neither is it true in respect of its analysis of the nature of polytheism, nor with regard to its analysis of the nature of monotheism, nor in its treatment of the part played by these two religions in history. Undeniably religion

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has always existed in the world, be.it in the form of monotheism, or polytheism, or both of them existing simultaneously. As for the priority of polytheism over monotheism or vice versa, the sociologists advance different views. The majority of them hold that in the beginning there was polytheism, and religion gradually evolved .towards monotheism. Some sociologists hold the opposite view

Religious traditions, or rather certain religious principles, confirm the second theory. But as to the question how the religion of polytheism came into existence, and whether it was invented to justify the acts of injustice and tyranny by the oppressors,

or if there was some other reason, researchers offer other explanations; and one cannot naively accept the view that polytheism is a product of social injustice. The interpretation of monotheism as the outcome of the aspirations of the oppressed classes to uphold the values of equality, brotherhood, and unity, as against the philosophy of discrimination and injustice of the rulers, appears to be more .unscientific as well as incompatible with the basic tenets of Islam

The above-mentioned view presents the truthful apostles of God as "the acquitted failures;" failures, since they failed in the struggle against evil and were overpowered throughout history; their religion could not influence society nor could it play any role comparable to the one played by the false religion of the rulers. Its role was restricted to passive criticism of the religion of the rulers. And the 'acquitted,' for the reason ,that, contrary to the claims of materialists

they never belonged to the pole of exploiters and plunderers, and were not agents of stagnation and passivism. Their alignment was not with the interests of the ruling class. On the contrary, they belonged to the pole of the oppressed and the exploited, arose from among them, experienced their agonies, worked in their interest, and .strove for the restoration of their rights usurped by the ruling class

As the truthful prophets are totally exonerated with respect to their call, message and their alignment, they are also exonerated from any accusation of failure; they were not responsible for it. It was the determinism of history arising out of the institution of private property which supported and sustained the opponent, the ruling class. The existence of private property necessarily divided society into two halves: the .exploiters and the exploited

The half consisting of the exploiters, by virtue of its ownership of material production, necessarily monopolized intellectual products also. One cannot oppose "determinism of history"-which is a materialistic term for fate and predestination, predestined not by a god in heavens but on the earth, a deity which is material, not abstract, whose power represented by the "economic base of society" operates through the channels

of the "tools of production." Therefore, the prophets are not responsible for their .failure

However, though the above-mentioned interpretation exonerates the righteous prophets, it negates the notion of a system of creation which is all good, is governed by truth, and where the good predominates over evil. The Islamic metaphysician optimistically

maintains that the system of being is based upon truth and good, that evil, falsehood, and wickedness do not have a fundamental reality and do not exist independently; they are accidental, relative, and transitory. Truth and good form the axis of the :system of being and the human society

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاء وَأَمَّا مَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِی الأَرْضِ

As for the foam, it passes away as scum [upon the banks], while that which is of use... (to mankind remains in the earth...(۱۳:۱۷

It is also said that in the struggle between truth and falsehood, truth emerges :victorious

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ..

Nay, but We hurl the true against the false, and it invalidates it, and behold! Falsehood (vanishes away...(۲۱:۱۸

It is further asserted that Divine providence has been with the truthful prophets all :along

إِنَّا لَنَنصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِی الْحَيَاهِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ

Surely We shall help Our Messengers and those who believe, in the life of the world, (and upon the day when the witnesses arise. (۴۰:۵۰

:The Qur'an also asserts

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ {١٧١} إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنصُورُونَ {١٧٢} وَإِنَّ جُندَنَا لَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ {١٧٣{

And verily Our word went forth of old unto Our servants, the envoys; assuredly they (shall be helped, and Our host-they are the victors. (٣٧: ١٧١-١٧٣

But the view discussed above refutes these principles because although it exonerates .all the prophets, messengers, and reformers of the past their God is held responsible

All these conflicting views pose a ticklish problem. On the one hand, the

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Qur'an presents an optimist view regarding the general course of the universe by repeatedly emphasizing that haqq (truth or right) is the axis of being and man's social existence. Theological philosophy on the basis of its particular principles claims that good invariably overcomes evil, right conquers wrong, and that evil is accidental, .relative, and unreal, without any real and independent existence of its own

On the other hand, a study of the history of the past and the present gives rise to a sense of pessimism regarding the laws governing the universe and appears to affirm that the view held by the pessimists that entire history is a cavalcade of catastrophes, .oppressions, exploitations, and violations against right and truth, is not unjustified

Is there any way out of this dilemma? Either our understanding of the system of realiy and human society is wrong, or we are mistaken in our comprehension of the meaning of the Qur'an by ascribing to it an optimistic world outlook. Or if we are not mistaken with respect to either of them, we have to accept an inherent, unresolvable .contradiction between the reality and the Qur'an

I have discussed the doubts which arise regarding the system of existence in this context andhave solved them by the grace of God in my book Divine Justice.(١) The doubts which arise regarding the course of history and human society would be dealt with under the title "The Battle between Good and Evil."(٢) God willing, there we shall

state our views for

Translator’s Note: The author emphasizes the importance of the principle of nature -۱ in the Qur’anic conception of man, and regards it as being central to Islamic ”.teachings. The term he uses is “umm al-ma’arif

Translator’s note: Martyr Mutahhari in his scholarly work “Adl-e Ilahi” (Divine - ۲ .Justice) has offered a convincing solution of this problem

the resolution of this doubt. I will be delighted to learn the well-reasoned views of .other scholars regarding this problem

Islam's 'Philosophy' of History

Criteria

In order to discover the viewpoint of any school of thought regarding the nature of history we may use certain criteria which help us to exactly determine its approach to different historic movements and events. For this purpose, here I offer some criteria which I consider proper for such a study. Of course, there may possibly be other .criteria which I fail to perceive

Before we take up these criteria and before we apply them for determining the viewpoint of Islam, it is essential to point out that, in our view, there are certain principles laid down in the Qur’an according to which the spiritual and intellectual foundation of society is considered prior to its material bases. The Qur’an has clearly :stated the following as a principle

.. إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُواْ مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ..

God changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in... (themselves .... (۱۳:۱۱

In other words, the destiny of a people is never changed unless they change their mental and spiritual attitudes. This verse clearly negates the theory of economic

.determinism of history

Nevertheless, I shall give an account of the criteria I have determined and on their basis evaluate the viewpoint of Islam regarding the nature of history.

Strategy of the Call .۱

Every school of thought that has a message for society and calls the people to accept it, has to adopt a

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specific method which is related on the one hand to its principal aims and objectives, and on the other to its viewpoint about the nature of historical movements. The call of a school is meant, firstly, to awaken a particular consciousness in the people, and, secondly, to arouse and mobilize them by using certain specific means of motivation.

An example is the humanist school of Auguste Comte. Comte advocates a kind of "scientific religion," and considers the essence of human evolution to lie in the sphere of the human mind. He believes that the human mind has passed through two stages. The first stage is that of mythology and philosophy. The second is the stage of science. Naturally, he relates all the desirable forms of consciousness to science, and all the means of motivation required for attaining this objective are also related to the scientific spirit.

Another example is that of Marxism which is a revolutionary theory of the working class. The consciousness which it awakens is related to class antagonism. The means of mobilizing the working class lie in stirring its complexes and its feelings of deprivation and victimization.

In addition to their points of view regarding society and history, various schools of thought differ from one another with respect to different types of consciousness they wish to awaken and different types of means employed for bringing about the desired change. Various ideologies, in accordance with their interpretation of history and the course of its development and their outlook of man, also

vary with regard to their target-audience, the reliance of their strategy on force and .their view regarding its moral justifiability

Some schools like Christianity approve only peaceful way of confrontation among human beings. Force or violence of all forms and under all conditions is disapproved of and considered immoral. Accordingly, one of its commandments is: "Offer the wicked man no resistance ... If anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man tries to take your tunic, lawfully or unlawfully, let him have your cloak as ".well

On the contrary certain other schools of thought, such as the philosophy of Neitzsche, regard power as the sole moral value. To him human perfection lies in power, and his superman is the most powerful among men. According to Neitzsche, Christian morality is the morality of slaves, of the weak and the humiliated and is therefore to .be blamed for the arrest of human progress

Certain other schools of thought associate morality with power and violence, though do not consider every kind of force as moral. According to Marxism, the use of force by the exploiters against the exploited is immoral, because it is intended to preserve the status quo, and causes stagnation. But the application of force by the exploited is moral, for it is used for the purpose of transforming society, leading it to a higher .stage

In other words, there is a continuous conflict in society between two groups: one playing the role of 'thesis' and

the other working as 'anti-thesis.' The force acting as 'thesis,' by virtue of its being reactionary, is immoral; the force acting as 'antithesis,' by virtue of being revolutionary and progressive, is moral. It is quite natural that the same force which is now regarded as 'moral,' at a later stage, after coming into conflict with its counter

force, would become 'immoral,' as it would then play a reactionary role, and the new rival force would become 'moral.' Hence morality is relative. What is moral at one .stage, is immoral at a higher and advanced stage

From the viewpoint of Christianity, its relation with the opposite group, judged by it to be opposed to progress and salvation, is that of softness and mildness. Only this kind of relation is morally right. According to Neitzsche, the only moral relation is the relation between the powerful and the weak. There is no moral value higher than power, and nothing more immoral than weakness. There is no sin greater than the sin .of being weak

According to Marxism the relation between two economically opposite classes is nothing but a relationship of antagonism translated into acts of violence. In this relationship, the acts of violence committed by the exploiting class are immoral for being antiprogressive, and the acts of violence committed by the exploited are morally justified. The relationship between newly emerging forces and old forces is that of continuous conflict.tand in this conflict morality is invariably on the side of new .forces

All the above-mentioned ideas

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are rejected by Islam. Islam does not confine morality to pacifism, persuasion through mild and peaceful manners, cordiality and love, as preached by Christianity. It holds that occasionally force and power are also moral. For the same reason Islam regards struggle against tyranny and injustice as a sacred duty and under certain .conditions makes jihad, which means armed struggle, an obligation

.It is evident that Neitzsche's view is absurd, anti-human, and decadent

The viewpoint of Marxism is based on the supposed mechanism operative in the development of history. Contrary to it, Islam regards violent confrontation with the opposing retrogressive group as a second alternative not the first. The first

alternative consists of communication through rational persuasion (al-hikmah) and :(moral preaching (al-maw'idah

ادْعُ إِلی سَبِیلِ رَبِّکَ بِالْحِکْمَهِ وَالْمَوْعِظَهِ الْحَسَنَهِ ..

.... Invite them to the path of God by appealing to reason and moral sense

Confrontation with the retrogressive forces through acts of violence is morally approved only when the methods of intellectual, moral, and spiritual persuasion have been unsuccessful. That is why the prophets who waged war against their adversaries had tried initially to convey their message through persuasion and preaching and occasionally through theological debating. Only when they failed in these attempts, or could attain only partial success, they considered the path of violent confrontation, Jihad, and acts of force as morally justifiable. The main reason of this attitude is that Islam, since its approach is spiritual not materialistic, believes in the wonderful power of rational argument, logical demonstration, and moral persuasion. Just as

it believes-to use an expression of Marx-in the power of weapons for the purpose of criticism, it also believes in the power of the weapon of criticism, and makes use of it. However, Islam does not consider it the sole weapon that should be used everywhere. The fact that armed struggle against the forces of reaction is permissible in Islam only as a second alternative not the first, and the fact that Islam has a strong faith in the power of reasoning, persuasion, and moral teaching, both point towards the characteristic spiritual outlook of Islam regarding man, and, consequently, society .and history

Thus, we come to know that the relation of a school of thought with its adversaries-whether it is one of sheer persuasion or of sheer conflict, or a two-stage relation consisting firstly of persuasion and secondly of conflict-clearly reveals the faith of any school of thought in the power of logical persuasion, and moral preaching, their effectiveness and their limits, and also reveals its outlook regarding history and the

.role of conflict in the course of history

Now we shall discuss the other aspect. Let us see what kind of consciousness Islam strives to awaken and what means it employs to invite people for embracing its .message

Islamic consciousness attaches foremost importance to the belief in the Divine origin and resurrection (al-mabda' wa al-ma'ad), This method of cultivating this consciousness has been used by the Qur’an and, according to it, also by the prophets of the past. The prophets awakened among

:the people the awareness of their origin and goal

Wherefrom have you come; where have you come; to where are you bound? From where has the world emerged, which course does it pursue, and in which direction is it moving? The primary concern instilled by the prophets into people's consciousness is the concern and responsibility towards the whole creation and existence. The concern for social responsibility is only a part of the concern for responsibility towards the whole universe and being. It has been pointed out earlier that the Meccan surahs, revealed to the Prophet (S) during the first thirteen years of this mission, bring into focus little except the issues of creation and resurrection.(۱)

:The Holy Prophet (S) started his mission with the declaration

قولوا لا إله إلَّا الله تفلحوا

.Say, there is no god except God, that you may be delivered

This was a religious movement which aimed at purifying human belief and thought. It is true that the principle of tawhid (Divine Unity) has many dimensions-if all teachings of Islam are analysed, they are found to be reducible to the principle of tawhid; in the same way, the whole system of Islamic ideas can be constructed on this principle(۲) but it should be noted that in the beginning this declaration was meant for no purpose

except changing the current polytheistic modes of thinking and worship into monotheistic belief and worship; nor if such a comprehensive objective was upheld .would it have been comprehensible for the people

When this consciousness, whose roots go down

Translator's Note: Martyr Mutahhari could not complete this book as he had - ۱ originally planned. There is no such heading in the present edition of the book. See .note No. ۲۱ below

Certain so-called Muslim intellectuals, in a number of commentaries they have - ۲ written on various Surahs in the Qur'an, totally deny the presence of even a single verse in the Qur'an dealing with resurrection. They say that wherever the word "dunya" (the present world) occurs in the Qur'an it always refers to the lower level of social existence, i.e. the system of discrimination, inequality, and exploitation, and wherever the word "akhirat" (the Hereafter) occurs, it means a "superior system of social existence," a system which permits no exploitation and discrimination, and which abolishes the institution of private property. If this meaning of "akhirah" is to be accepted, it means that the Qur'an, a thousand years before the emergence of .Marx's materialist philosophy, announce the death of religion and closed its file

deep into the human nature, created a feeling of enthusiasm for defending and spreading this faith in a follower, he would not hesitate to sacrifice his life, property, social position, and children for its sake. The prophets started with what in our days is called "the superstructure," working towards what is called 'the base' or 'infrastructure.' According to prophetic teachings, man is more committed to faith and ideology than to material interests. In fact, it is this faith and ideology which is the base, and labour, which is a relation with nature, natural resources or society, .constitutes the superstructure

Every religious call, in order to be effective, must be 'prophetic,' that is.it should be accompanied by persistent reminding of origin and resurrection. The prophets

mobilized the society by awakening this awareness, and by cultivating this con… sciousness, by removing all dust from the face of human conscience and by relying on the notions of God's good pleasure, His sovereignty, His reward and retribution. In thirteen places the Qur’an makes mention of the ridwan (good pleasure) of God. This shows the kind of spiritual motivation employed by Islam for mobilization of the society of believers. This awareness may be called Divine or cosmic consciousness.

Of significance at the second level in Islamic teachings is man's consciousness of his humanity, and realization of the nobility and honour of man's station. In the view of Islam man is not the animal who in the beginning was like all other primates for hundreds of millions of

years, who survives and has attained this stage of evolution by treacherously eliminating others in the struggle for existence.

On the contrary, he is a being who carries within him the light of Divine Spirit, before whom the angels prostrated, a being to whom are addressed calls from the Divine Throne. Despite all animal propensities toward lust, sensuality, corruption and evil, his being is endowed with a sacred spark which is essentially averse to wickedness bloodshed, falsehood, corruption, meanness, degradation, and humiliation and which resists repression and tyranny. That spark is a manifestation of Divine honour and majesty:

..وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ..

(Honor belongs to Allah and to His messengers and the believers…(۶۳:۸…

The Prophet (S) has said:

شرف المرء قيامه بالليل و عزه استغناؤه عن الناس

Man’s nobility is in his nightlong vigils, and his honour lies in his being in no need of people.

:Ali (A) said to his fellowmen during the Battle of Siffin‘

الحیاه فی موتکم قاهرین و الموت فی حیاتکم مقهورین

.Life is to die victorious, and death is to survive in subjugation

:Al-Husayn ib ‘Ali (A) said

لا أری الموت إلّا سعاده و الحیاه مع الظالمین إلا برماً

I can see happiness only in death, and find nothing but agony and disgust in life in the .company of tyrants and oppressors

:He also said

هیهات منّا الذله

!We and disgrace? How preposterous

All these saying rely on man’s sense of honor and nobility which are inherent in human .nature

Of significance at the third level in Islamic teachings is awareness of one’s social .rights and responsibilities

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There are several instances in the Qur’an which, by relying on the necessity of fighting for restoration for one’s rights or the rights of others, use this obligation as a means of motivation and mobilization. For an example, we may refer to the following :verse of Surat al-Nisa

وَمَا لَكُمْ لاَ تُقَاتِلُونَ فِی سَبِیلِ اللّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِینَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاء وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِینَ یَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَـذِهِ الْقَرْیَهِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنکَ وَلِیّاً وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنکَ نَصِیراً

How should you not fight for the cause of Allah and of the oppressed among the men, women, and children, who say, 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose people

are oppressors, and appoint to us a protector from Thee, and appoint to us from Thee (a helper'? (۴:۷۵

This verse relies on two spiritual values for motivating towards jihad. The first value is necessity of struggling in the way of God; the second, human responsibility to.rescue helpless and defenceless human beings out of the clutches of oppressors. In Surat at-Hajj; God says:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ {۳۹} الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَن يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيراً وَلَيَنصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ۴۰}} الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ {۴۱}

Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged –and surely God is

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able to give them victory-who were driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: 'Our Lord is Allah. ' Had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Assuredly Allah helps one who helps Him-surely Allah is All-strong, Almighty-who, if We establish them in the land, establish prayers, pay the poor-due, and bid to honour and forbid dishonour. (And to Allah belongs the issue of all affairs. (۲۲:۳۹-۴۱

We notice in this verse that the sanction of jihad and defence begins with reference to the rights of those who are permitted to fight. But, at the same time, the underlying philosophy of defence is regarded as a matter over and above and more fundamental than the injustice done to certain people. This philosophy of defence is that if the believers and the faithful do not act and do not rise to wage war against unbelievers, the mosques and other places of worship, which form the heart of the spiritual life of a society, would be demolished, ruined and deserted. In Surat al-Nisa, the Qur’an says:

لاَّ يُحِبُّ اللّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوَءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلاَّ مَن ظُلِمَ

(God likes not the utterance of harsh speech unless one has been wronged .. (۴:۱۴۸

Evidently this is a sort of encouragement of the uprising by the oppressed. In the :Qur’an after censuring the poets for their extravagantly fanciful ideas, adds

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا

p: ۲۲۳

الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيراً وَانتَصَرُوا مِن بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوا

Except those who believe, do good deeds, remember Allah much and vindicate (by" (means of poetry) themselves after they have been wronged." (۲۶:۲۲۷

Although according to the Qur’an and the Sunnah (the conduct of the Holy Prophet) it is a grave sin to submit to tyranny and it is the duty of everyone to realize one's rights, these things have been mentioned as values having human aspect. The Qur’an does not rely on any psychic obsession nor does it excite jealousy or a carnal desire. For example it never says that such and such group is enjoying a lavish style of life, ?eating, drinking and making merry; why don't you take its place

If an attempt is made to seize the property of someone, Islam does not allow the owner to keep quiet on the plea that material goods have no value. Similarly if an attempt is made to violate the honour of a person, it is the duty of that person not to take the matter lightly or keep quiet. According to a tradition, a person who is killed defending his honour or his property is to be regarded as a martyr who has laid down .his life for the cause of Allah

If Islam urges people to defend their property, that does not mean that Islam asks them to amass wealth or to be greedy. It only asks them to defend their rights. Similarly when it considers it a duty to

p: ۲۲۴

defend one's honour, it does so because it regards chastity as the highest social value .and considers man to be the custodian of it

An Ideology's Nomenclature .۲

Every school of thought identifies its followers with a specific name. For example the racial theory is the distinctive mark of the adherents of that theory. When they say " We", they mean the whites. The Marxist theory is the theory of the workers. The followers of this school call themselves workers and identify themselves by this name. When they say "We", they mean workers. The Christians simply ascribe themselves to the person of Christ as if they have no doctrine nor any ideology. Their mark of .identification is that they look for Christ and want to join him

It is a characteristic of Islam that it has not chosen any racial, class, professional, local, regional or individual label to introduce its school and its followers. The adherents of this school are not known by any such designation as the Arabs, the Semites, the poor, the rich, the oppressed, the whites, the blacks, the Asians, the Easterns, the Westerns, the Muhammadans, the Qur'anians, the Qiblites etc. None of .the above names represents the real identity of the adherents of Islam

When the question of the identity of this school and its followers arises, all these names vanish. Only one thing remains, that is the relation between man and Allah. Islam means submission to Allah. The Muslims are an ummah that submits to Allah, to truth and to the

revelation and the inspiration rising from the horizon of truth and communicated to the heart of the most worthy persons. Then what is the nature of the identity of the Muslims? What label does their religion attach to them and under what banner does it .want them to assemble? The answer is Islamic submission to truth

The criterion of unity that every school approves for its followers is a reliable means .of judging its aims and objectives

It also helps us to understand the outlook of school regarding man, society, and .history

Favourable and Unfavourable Conditions for Acceptability .۳

We have said earlier that different schools have different view about the mechanism of the movement of history. One school is of the opinion that the natural mechanism of this movement is the pressure of one class against another class. Another school holds that it is the friction between a reactionary class. Still another school maintains that the real mechanism should be looked for in the pure state of human nature, .which is evolutionary and progressive

Some other schools have some other opinions. Every school in its teachings enumerates such causes, conditions, obstacles and impediments of the movement of history. as are appropriate to its conception of its mechanism The school which believes that the mechanism of the movement of history is the pressure of a class against another, in order to mobilize society and bring it into motion tries to create such pressure if it does not already exist. Marx in some of his works has pointed out that the

existence of a subjugated and oppressed class is absolutely necessary for the .emergence of a class of free people

At the end of his study he says: " Where does the possibility of liberation for the German nation lie? Our answer is that: We must form a class which is decisively in chains.' (۱) Such an ideology regards reforms as an obstacle in the way of a revolution, because reforms reduce pressure and a reduction in pressure prevents the explosion or at least delays the revolution. In contrast, a school that believes that movement is an intrinsic and essential quality of society never suggests the creation of shackles for any class, for it does not regard pressure as a necessary condition of evolution, nor .does it consider reforms as an obstacle in the way of progress

What are the favourable and unfavourable conditions from the viewpoint of Islam?

The Islamic interpretation of these conditions revolves around the nature of the human being. Sometimes the Qur’an stresses the condition of adherence to guidance for the God-fearing” [۲:۲]). Sometimes it”... (هـدىً للمتقيـن primordial piety mentions anxiety and apprehension arising from awareness of responsibility vis-à-vis who fear God in the“ (الَّذين يخشون ربهم بالغيب the whole system of existence as a condition who fears the All-merciful in the Unseen,” [۳۶:۱۱]).“ و خَشِيَ الرحمن بالغيب , Unseen,” [۲۱:۴۹]; or Sometimes it mentions the condition that the God-given nature within one should to warn him who is“ لِينذِرَ من كان حيّاً :have remained intact and alive

p: ۲۲۷

Allamah Tabatabai, al-Mizan, see the commentary on the last verse of Surat Al-‘ -۱ .Imran

alive” (۳۶:۷۰). Thus the essential conditions according to Islam for acceptance of its call are piety, anxiety and apprehension arising out of a sense of responsibility towards .the system of creation, and intact survival of one's God-given nature

إثـم القلب In opposition to these conditions are such spiritual and moral vices as rusting of the heart,” (۸۳:۱۴); sealing of the“ رَيـن القلب ;(sinfulness of the heart,” (۲:۲۸۳“ heart (۲:۷), inner blindness or loss of sight (۲۲:۴۶); deafness of the heart (۴۱:۴۴); corruption of the book of the soul (۹۱:۱۰); blind adherence to the practices of ancestors (۴۳:۲۳); personality cult or hero worship (۳۳:۶۳); reliance on surmise. and conjecture (۶:۱۱۶), and so on. Extravagance, affluence, and habitual luxury are also regarded as deterrents, because they strengthen the animal qualities in man and transform him into a beast and even a predator. According to the Qur’an, these factors impede .advancement towards the welfare of the society and are injurious to its development

According to the Islamic teachings, young people as compared to the aged, and the poor as compared to the affluent, are more receptive to the teachings of Islam; since the youth due to their young age escape psychological pollution and their nature is purer; and the poor also are purer because their souls are not distorted by luxury and .wealth

These positive and negative conditions for the acceptability of Islam affirm that the mechanism of social and historical change suggested by the Qur'an is more spiritual-psychological in nature than materialistic and economic.

Rise and Fall of Societies .۴

point

Every sociological

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school usually deals with the causes of the rise and progress of societies and reasons of their degeneration and decline. The viewpoint of a school regarding the main factors of progress or decline, indicates its approach to society and history and their movement towards development and decline.

The Holy Qur'an, especially with reference to the stories and anecdotes related to these matters, explains its view. We have to see whether the Qur'an interprets the causes of change in terms of the so-called infrastructure or in terms of the superstructure. To be more precise, we have to know what things' are considered by the Qur'an as the basis and what matters are regarded as constituting the superstructure. Does the Qur'an emphasize the material and economic factors as being basic, or does it attach basic importance to matters pertaining to faith and morality? Or does it consider all the factors combined together responsible for the rise and fall of a society without giving priority to anyone of them?

The Qur'an, on the whole, enumerates four factors influencing the rise and fall of a society. In passing, I will give a brief account of these factors.

A. Justice and Injustice

This notion finds reflection in many verses of the Qur'an. One of them is the fourth verse of Surat al-Qasas, which I have already quoted in the context of the 'verse of oppression':

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِی الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعاً يَسْتَضْعِفُ طَائِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

Verily Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided

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its inhabitants into castes, oppressing one party of them, slaughtering their sons, and (sparing their women. Verily, he was of those who work corruption. (۲۸:۴

This holy verse first describes Pharaoh's lust for power and superiority and his claim to divinity, which led him to treat others as slaves. His policy of discrimination had divided them into mutually conflicting groups. He had humiliated a particular group of his people, killing their sons and sparing their women (for serving Pharaoh and his clique). The Qur'an mentions him as a 'mufsid' (one who corrupts). Evidently the sentence إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِن المفسدين 'Verily, he was of those who corrupt,' is intended to condemn such offences against society which demolish its very foundations.

B. Unity and Disunity

In the Surat Al 'Imran , the verse ۱۰۳ lays down a clear command to unite on the basis of faith and to hold on to the bond of God, and prohibits disunity and division. In a following verse (۳: ۱۰۵) the believers are asked again not to behave like their predecessors [Jews and Christians] who quarrelled with one another and divided. Quite similar to it is the verse ۱۵۳ in Surat al- 'An 'am. In the same surah, verse ۶۵ :states

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَى أَن يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَاباً مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعاً وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُم بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ..

Say, He is able to send forth upon you chastisement, from above you or from under your feet, or to confuse you in sects and make you taste the violence of one

p: ۲۳۰

(another... (۶:۶۵

:In the Surat al-'Anfal, the verse ۴۶ declares

.. وَلاَ تَنَازَعُواْ فَتَفْشَلُواْ وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ..

Do not quarrel with one another for then you will be weak and your power will... (depart from you...(٨:۴۶

C. Practice or Neglect of the Principle of al-‘Amr bi al-Ma’ruf wa al-Nahy ‘an al-Munkar

The Qur’an puts great emphasis on the duty of of al-‘Amr bi al-Ma’ruf wa al-Nahy ‘an al-Munkar (enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency). An evident inference that may be drawn from one of its verses is that negligence of this great duty on the part of a nation ultimately results in its destruction and doom. This is verse ٧٩ in Surat al-Ma’idah which explains that one of the reasons for the denial of Divine mercy and compassion to the infidels of Bani Israel was their nonobservance of the duty to :prohibit others from vices

كَانُواْ لاَ يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَن مُّنكَرٍ فَعَلُوهُ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ

They forbade not one another any dishonor they commited; surely evil were the .(things they did. (۵:٧٩

In reliable Islamic traditions there are ample references to the advantages of observance and perils of abandonment of the duty of enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency. However, we abstain from quoting them here for the sake of .brevity

D. Moral Corruption and Degeneration

There are various verses in the Qur’an in this context also. In a series of verses luxury and opulence are regarded to be the cause of destruction and ruin.(١) There are also a number of verses in which the word "zulm" (cruelty, injustice, oppression, tyranny) occurs. In Qur’anic terminology this word does not specifically mean violation of the rights of an individual

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Andre Peter, op. cit., p. ٣۵ (the text and the footnote). Here we come to know that -١

the viewpoint of Marxism which hols that only the acts of violence of the oppressed class are moral, because they accelerate the course of social evolution, while the same kind of acts by the oppressing class are immoral, because they cause stagnation, is not defendable. It means that, in accordance with the views of this school, the exercise of pressure by the oppressors is as moral and effective in the course of social evolution as violence by the oppressed. The only difference between them being with regard to their orientation: one is directed towards the past and the other towards the future – not with regard to their effective role in social development. Evidently the retrogressive or progressive orientation cannot solely determine the morality or immorality of an act, without considering the motivate behind the act, for judging its morality, and such a position, in the view of Marxism, .amounts to a kind of idealism

or group by other individual or group. It also includes injustice to one's own self', as well as injustice of a nation to itself. Actually the word zulm is used in the Qur’an in a .general sense

Any kind of deviation from the right path of humanness is injustice, and includes all acts of injustice to others as well as all acts of impropriety, corruption, perversion and immorality. This word is more often used in the Qur’an in the second sense (i.e., moral deviation). Such verses which consider zulm in its general sense as the main cause of destruction and ruin of nations are very numerous. It is beyond the scope of the .present work to discuss them here

Taking in view all these criteria as a whole, we can grasp the view of the Qur’an regarding the basis of society and that of history. The Qur’an allots a decisive and .determining role to most of the factors which some consider as superstructural

Evolution and Change in History

point

Whatever has been discussed so far concerns one of the two , most important problems of history, i.e., nature of history whether it is materialistic or not. The other

.important problem concerns change and evolution in human history

We know that social life is not confined to man alone. Some other living creatures also have social life to some extent. They organize their lives on the basis of cooperation, division of labour, and sharing of responsibilities according to set rules and .regulations

We all know that the honeybee is

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such a creature. But there is a basic difference between the social existence of man and that of other animals; the pattern of their social life always remains fixed and static. Any evolution and change do not take place in the system of their existence, or in the words of Morris Metterlink, in their culture, if the term 'culture' can be used for animals. On the contrary, social life of man is ever changing and dynamic. There is not just a movement, but even an acceleration; i.e. the rate of movement increases with .time

Thus the history of human social existence has different periods which are dis… tinguished from one another in various aspects. For instance there are different periods according to the means of livelihood: the period of hunting, the period of cultivation, and the period of industrialization. According to economic system the different periods may be classified as the period of communism, the period of slavery, the period of feudalism, the period of capitalism, and the period of socialism. According to political system, we have the period of tribal rule, the period of despotic monarchy, the period of aristocracy, and the period of democracy; according to sex, the period of matriarchy, and the period of patriarchy. In the same way we may have .other classifications from the viewpoint of other aspects

Why isn't such a change exhibited in the social life of other animals? What is the secret of this change, and what is the main factor responsible for transition of

p: ۲۳۳

man from one social phase to another? In other words, what is that human faculty that propels human existence forward, and which is not possessed by the animals? How does this transition and advancement occur, what are the laws that govern it, ?and by what mechanism is it controlled

There is a question which is usually raised at this point by the philosophers of history, whether evolution and progress are real? In other words, are the changes that have been taking place in the social life of man throughout history actually in the direction ?of progress and evolution? What are the criteria of evolution

Some are skeptical that these changes may be regarded as progressive and evolutionary, and their views are discussed in related books.[1] And some others regard movement of history as cyclic, claiming that history starts from a point and after passing through certain phases returns again to the same point. 'Once again,' in .their view, is the eternal cry of history

For example, in the beginning a coarse tribal system is established by certain venturesome and determined nomadic people, which gradually evolves into aristocracy. The monopoly of aristocrats results in a popular uprising and giving birth to democracy. The chaos and anarchy created by unlimited and unchecked freedom in the democratic system once again leads to the re-emergence of despotism, helped .by a tribal spirit

Here we do not wish to enter an elaborate discussion on this subject and postpone it to some other occasion. However, for the purpose of the

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.Refer to ۱۱:۱۱۶, ۲۱:۱۳, ۲۳:۳۳, ۶۴ -۱

present study, we assume that the movement and course of history are on the whole .progressive, and proceed accordingly

Nevertheless, it is essential to remind here that all those who consider the movement

of history to be in the general direction of progress acknowledge the fact that by no means the future is better necessarily than the past for all societies under all conditions; neither do they say that the course of societies is always marked by progress without any interruptions or set-back. Undeniably, societies become stagnant, decadent, and retrogressive. They have the tendency of inclining towards the right or the left and consequently are subject to decline and fall. All that is meant is .that the human society on the whole is passing through an evolutionary course

In the books on philosophy of history the problem regarding the dynamics of history and the motivating factors responsible for social progress is usually formulated in a manner which is revealed to be defective on some reflection. In the following sections .the views usually advanced on this issue will be discussed

The Racial Theory .۱

According to this theory, certain races are mainly responsible for the advancement of history. Some races have the ability of creating culture and civilization, while others do not possess such talents. Some races contribute to science, philosophy, arts, crafts, .and morality, while others are merely consumers of these products

It is concluded that there exists some kind of division of work between the races. The races endowed with aptitude for knowledge, learning, and statecraft, and

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with ability to create arts, culture, crafts, and technology should be engaged in these higher, sophisticated and refined human activities; while the races not endowed with such talents should be excused from these activities and instead be engaged in hard physical labour and menial tasks which do not need refinement of thought and taste. Aristotle, who holds this view regarding racial differences, justifies the enslavement .of certain races by other races on the same grounds

Some thinkers believe that only particular races are able to lead the course of history. For example, the northern races being superior to the southern races have been responsible for the advancement of cultures. Count Gobino, the famous French

philosopher who was for three years French ambassador to Iran about hundred .years ago, believed in this theory

The Geographical Theory .۲

According to this theory, the main factor responsible for creating civilization and culture and for development of industry is physical environment. Moderate temperaments and strong minds develop in regions of temperate climate. In the beginning of his book, "al-Qanun," Ibn Sina has elaborately discussed the effect of physical environmental factor on the modes of thought, taste, sensibility and other .psychological aspects of human personality

According to this theory, the factor that directs the advancement of history is not of racial origin or heredity. It is not true that a certain race regardless of its region or environment is the maker of history and responsible for its advancement and a ,certain other race whatever its physical environment lacks such abilities. In fact

the differences of races are caused by different environments. Moreover, with displacement and migration of races capacities are also redistributed. Thus particular regional and geographical factors are responsible in the main for the advancement and revitalization of civilizations. Montesquieu, the French sociologist of the seventeenth century, supports this point of view in his famous book De l'ésprit des lois .((The Spirit of the Laws

The Theory of the Role of Genius or Heroes .۳

According to this theory, all scientific, political, economic, technological, and moral changes and developments throughout history are brought about .by men of genius. The difference between human beings and other animals is that from a biological point of view all other animals are equal in respect of natural capacities. There is at .least no remarkable difference among the individuals of a certain species

In contrast, human individuals bear vast differences regarding their capacities and

talents. The geniuses of every society are extraordinary individuals of exceptional abilities endowed with extraordinary powers of intellect, sensibility, will, and creativity. Whenever such individuals emerge in a society they contribute to its advancement taking it ahead scientifically, technically, morally, militarily, and politically. According to this theory, majority of individuals lack initiative and creativity. They are simply followers and consumers of the Ideas and the products of the .industry of others

But there always exists a minority of creative individuals in almost all societies who act as leaders, forerunners, innovators, and inventors, who produce new Ideas, new methods, and new technologies. They are the people who steer society in the forward direction and enable it

to enter into a new higher phase. Carlyle, the famous English thinker in his well-known book Heroes, Hero worship and the Heroic in History, starting his book with the role of .the Holy Prophet (S), holds such a view

In Carlyle's view, every nation has one or more historical personalities in whom the whole history of a nation is reflected. Or more precisely, It may be said that the history of a nation reflects the personality and genius of one or more of its heroes. For instance, the history of Islam mirrors the personality of the Holy Prophet (S); the history of modern France mirrors the personality of Napoleon and certain other great men, and the last sixty years of the history of Soviet Russia mirror the personality of .Lenin

The Economic Theory .۴

According to this theory, economy is the motivating factor of history. All social and historical modes of every nation, including the cultural, religious, political, military and social aspects, reflect the mode and relations of production of a society. Any change in .the economic infrastructure of the society totally transforms it and steers it forward

The men of genius, whose role was discussed earlier, are nothing but the expressions

of economic, political, and social needs of society; and these needs in their turn are the effects of changes in the tools of production. Karl Marx, and in general all Marxists, and occasionally a number of non-Marxists, subscribe to this view. This is .probably the most dominant theory of our times

The Religious Theory .۵

According to this

theory, all worldly incidents have Divine origin and are governed by God's consummate Wisdom. All evolutions and changes occurring in history are manifestations of the Divine Will and God's omniscient wisdom. Thus whatever moves history forward and transforms it is the Will of God. The drama of history is written and directed by the sacred Will of God. Bossuet, the famous historian and patriarch, .who acted as the tutor to Louis the Fifteenth, supports this view

These are the main theories that are usually discussed in the books of philosophy of .history as the motivating forces or causes of history

In my view this kind of formulation of the problem is not correct and there is a confusion of issues. Most of these theories are not properly related to the motivating cause of history, which we want to discover. For instance, the racial theory is a sociological hypothesis, which may be proposed in relation to the question whether or not all races have-or at least could have had-the same kind of hereditary talents and are of equal level. If they are equal according to natural talents, all the races have an equal share in directing the movement of history. And if they are not equally talented, .only some races have played, and could have played, the role of advancing history

Then it seems proper to mention this theory in this context. Nevertheless the secret of the philosophy of history remains in darkness: it does not make any difference for the purpose of

solution whether we suppose that only a single race has been responsible for the evolution of history or if all human races participated in the process of change and advancement, because in both the cases it does not answer the question why man, or a race of men, undergoes this type of change and evolution while no such changes occur in the lives of animals. Where does the secret lie? Whether a single race is instrumental in the movement of history or if all the races participate in this process, .makes no difference at all for answering this question

Similar is the case with the geographical theory. It is useful in the context of the sociological problem regarding the role of regional environment in the development of man's intellectual, cultural, aesthetic and physiological faculties. Some environments hold the human being at or near the level of animals, but in other environments the distinction of man from animals is made more prominent and pronounced. According to this theory, history's movement is confined to the people of a specific region; in other regimes life remains static and unchanged like that of animals. But the main question still remains unanswered, since the honeybee and all other gregarious animals living in such geographically superior regions and zones remain unaffected by the movement of history. Then what is the main factor responsible for this disparity in the lives of the two different types of living beings, one of which remains static and unchanged whereas the other

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?type undergoes unceasing change from one phase to another

The most irrelevant among these theories is the theory of the Divine origin of history, because it is not history alone which manifests the Divine Will. The whole universe, from its beginning to the end, with all its myriads of causes and effects and all positive and negative conditions, mirrors the Divine Will. The relation of the Divine Will is the same with all causes and phenomena of the universe. In the same way as the ever-changing and ever-evolving life of the human being manifests the Divine Will, so also the static and monotonous life of the honeybee manifests the Will of God. Hence this theory fails to unfold the mystery why the Divine Will created and moulded human life

in a pattern which is ever-changing and evolving, and why it created other beings .according to a static pattern which makes them unable to change

The economic theory of history also lacks in technical and methodical precision. It has not been formulated in a correct way. The way it is formulated, it merely throws light on the nature of history as materialistic and economic, and all the other social modes are regarded as the accidents of this substance of history. According to it, if any change takes place in the economic foundation of a society, the transformation of all other social modes is also accompanied. But the theory is based on "if". The main .question, however, remains unanswered

Supposing that economy is the

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foundation of society, "if" economic infrastructure changes, the whole society also changes with it. But the question as to when and under what circumstances and by means of which factors the infrastructure changes followed by changes in the superstructures, is not touched. In other words, to say that economy is the basis is not sufficient to explain the dynamic and changing character of society. Instead of saying that society is the base, the advocates of this theory may properly formulate their position in this manner: by stating that economy is the motivating factor of history, which is materialistic in essence; the contradiction between the economic infrastructure and the social superstructure (or between the two tiers of the infrastructure, viz. the tools of production and the relations of production) is the .moving force that pushes history forward

There is no doubt that this is what the advocates of the abovementioned view mean when they say that economy is the moving force of history. What they mean to assert is that all changes in history originate from internal contradiction between the tools of production and the relations of production. But here we are only concerned with proper formulation of the theory, not with conjecturing the inner purpose and .objective of its advocates

The theory of the role of genius in history, regardless of its truth, IS directly relevant .to philosophy of history and the question of motivating factor of history

Thus until now we have arrived at two views regarding the moving force

of history. One is the theory of heroes, which considers history to be a product of certain individuals, and claims that the majority of members of society lack creativeness and power of initiative. If a society consisted of such individuals alone, .even the minutest change is unlikely to occur in society

But a few individuals with God-gifted genius, when they appear on the social scene take initiative draw plans, make bold resolutions, and demonstrate extraordinary resistance and force of will, drawing multitudes of ordinary folk behind them for realizing the desirable change. The personality of these heroes is purely a product of exceptional natural and hereditary processes. Social conditions and material requirements of a society do not play any effective role in creating and moulding .these personalities

The second is the theory of contradiction between the social infrastructure and superstructure, or the theory of economic causation which has been already referred .to

The Theory of Nature .۶

There is a third theory which may be called 'the theory of human nature.' According to it, man is endowed with certain inherent qualities, which account for the evolutionary character of social life. One of such qualities is the capacity for collecting and preserving the experiences of life. Whatever has been attained through experience is .retained to provide the basis for subsequent experiences

Another is man's capacity of learning through speech and writing. Experiences and attainments of others are communicated through speech and, on a higher level, through writing. Experiences of a generation, through oral narration and writing, are

preserved

for the later generations. In this way, collective experience is accumulated with .the. passage of time. This is the reason why the Qur’an gives especial Importance to the :gifts of articulate speech and the pen by making a prominent mention of them

الرَّحْمَنُ {۱} عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ {۲} خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ {۳} عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ {۴{

The Beneficent has taught the Qur’an. He created the human being and He has .(taught him articulable utterance. (۵۵:۱-۴

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِى خَلَقَ {۱} خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ {۲} اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ {۳} الَّذِى عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ {۴{

Read: In the Name of Thy Lord, Who created, created the human being from a blood- .(clot. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who taught by the pen. (۹۶:۱-۴

The third quality of man is that he is endowed with the power of reason and inventiveness. This mysterious quality bestows upon him the powers of creativity and invention which are the manifestation of Divine creativity. The fourth quality is' his natural tendency for innovation. It means that man not only possesses the ability of invention and creation which he translates into -action whenever a necessity arises, .but the urge for creation and invention is ingrained in his nature

The capacity to preserve and store experiences, in addition to the capacity to exchange and communicate experiences with others, and the capacity for creation and his natural urge for invention and innovation are the forces that continually drive man towards progress. The other animals neither possess the capacity of preserving experiences nor the capacity of transmitting and communicating their experiences(۱) neither the

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See E. H. Carr, What is History?. See also Will Durant, Studies in History, The - ۱

.Pleasures of Philosophy, pp. ۲۹۱-۳۱۲

capacity to create and invent, nor the urge for innovation. None of these qualities which characterize the human intellect exist in the animals. It is because of these qualities that man advances and the animals remain static. Now we shall critically .examine these theories in detail

The Role of Personality in History

Some people have claimed that "history is a battle between genius and ordinariness." It means that common and average people always favour the existing situation which they are used to, whereas men of genius want to alter the existing condition into a more developed and advanced one. Carlyle claims that history starts with the .accounts of the lives of great men and heroes

This viewpoint is actually based on two assumptions. First, that the society itself lacks any nature and personality. The composition of society is not a real synthesis of its members. Individuals are independent of one another. The interaction among individuals does not create any social spirit; any real, synthetic entity which has its own specific nature, personality, and laws does not come into existence. There are .merely individuals and individual psychologies

The relation among human individuals in a society regarding their independence from one another is like the relation among the trees in a forest. Social phenomena are nothing but the sum total of individual events in the lives of individuals. According to this view the causes which govern society are determined by accidents and conflicts .taking place in individual lives; there are no general and universal laws of causation

The second assumption is

that human individuals are created with different and divergent characteristics. In spite of the fact that human individuals are social beings or rational animals, almost all human beings lack originality and creativity. The majority are simply consumers of

culture and not its producers. The only difference between animals and such people is that the animals cannot be even consumers. The spirit of this majority is one of .imitating, following, and worshipping their heroes

But a very small minority of human beings consists of heroes, geniuses, extraordinary supernormal individuals, who are independent in thought, creative and inventive, with a strong will power, who stand out distinct from the majority, as if they belong to a higher order of beings from a different world. Had it not been for the scientific intel… lectual, philosophical, mystical, moral, political, social, technical and artistic geniuses, humanity would have remained in a primitive state and would not have taken a single .step toward advancement

I personally consider both of these assumptions as vulnerable. The first one is vulnerable for the reason mentioned earlier. In the discussion' on society I have proved that society itself possesses its own specific nature, personality and laws according to which it functions. These laws in themselves are progressive and evolutionary by nature. Hence this hypothesis should be discarded. Now we have to see whether an individual can play any role in the development of society which has its own nature, personality and laws and pursues its course of evolution according to .them

We shall

p: ۲۴۶

discuss this matter afterwards. Admitting the differences among individuals, the second assumption is also incorrect, as it is unjustifiable to say that only heroes and geniuses possess the power of creation and the majority of people are merely passive consumers of culture or civilization. All human individuals, more or less, possess innovative and creative talents; on account of these talents all individuals, or at least a majority of them, participate m creative, productive, and innovative' .activities, however small their share may be as compared to that of geniuses

Contrary to this theory that personalities make history is another view which

maintains that history makes personalities, not' vice versa. It means that the objective needs of a society are responsible for creating personalities.

Montesquieu has said, "Great men and important events are the signs and results of greater and lengthier processes." Hegel said "Great men do not give birth to history but act as midwives." Great men are 'signs' not 'agents.' Some like Durkheim who believe in the independent essence of society hold that human individuals in themselves have absolutely no personality. They acquire their whole personality from society. Individuals and personalities are nothing but expressions and manifestations of the social spirit, and in the words of Mahmud Shabistari, are just as "holes of a niche screen through which the social spirit emanates."

Others like Marx put social labour at the centre of human sociology, and consider society prior to man's social consciousness '. They regard the consciousness of individuals as the expression and

manifestation of material social needs. According to their view, personalities are manifestations and expressions of the material and economic needs of a society... (۱)

Note by the Publisher of the Book

It is a matter of obvious regret that the manuscript of Martyr Mutahhari ends at this point. It is obvious that the author had in his mind many other ideas which he could not enter. He achieved this cherished desire to obtain martyrdom in the way of God.

We hope, in future, to present a more complete discussion with the help of his scattered notes, added them to the future editions of the book.

۱- Among certain animal species, at the level of routine existence, not at the level of scientific consciousness, a kind of transfer of learning exists. For instance, the Holy Qur'an refers to the story of the ant and Solomon in verse ۲۷:۱۸.

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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